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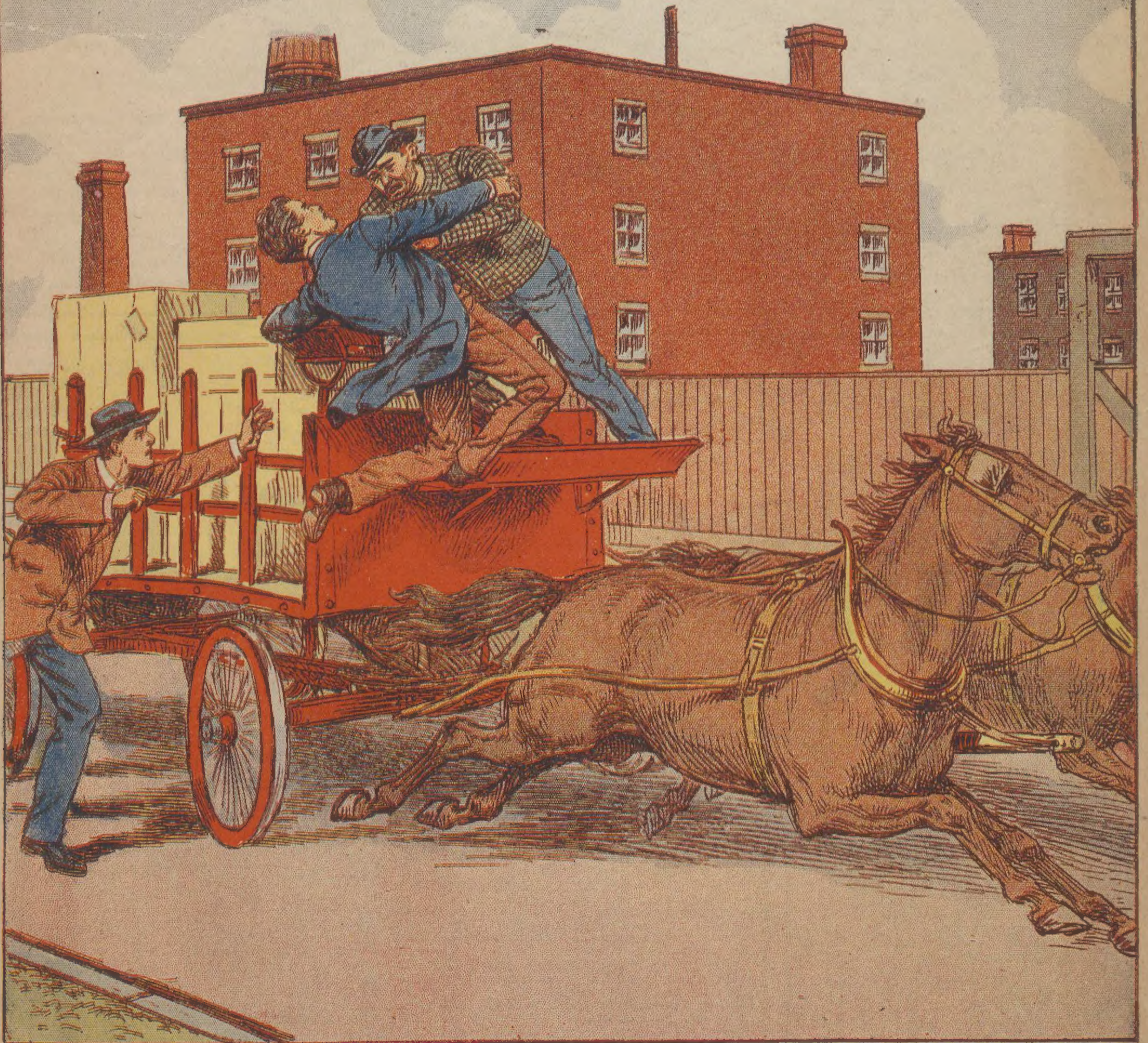
FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

DICK AND HIS CHUM.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE



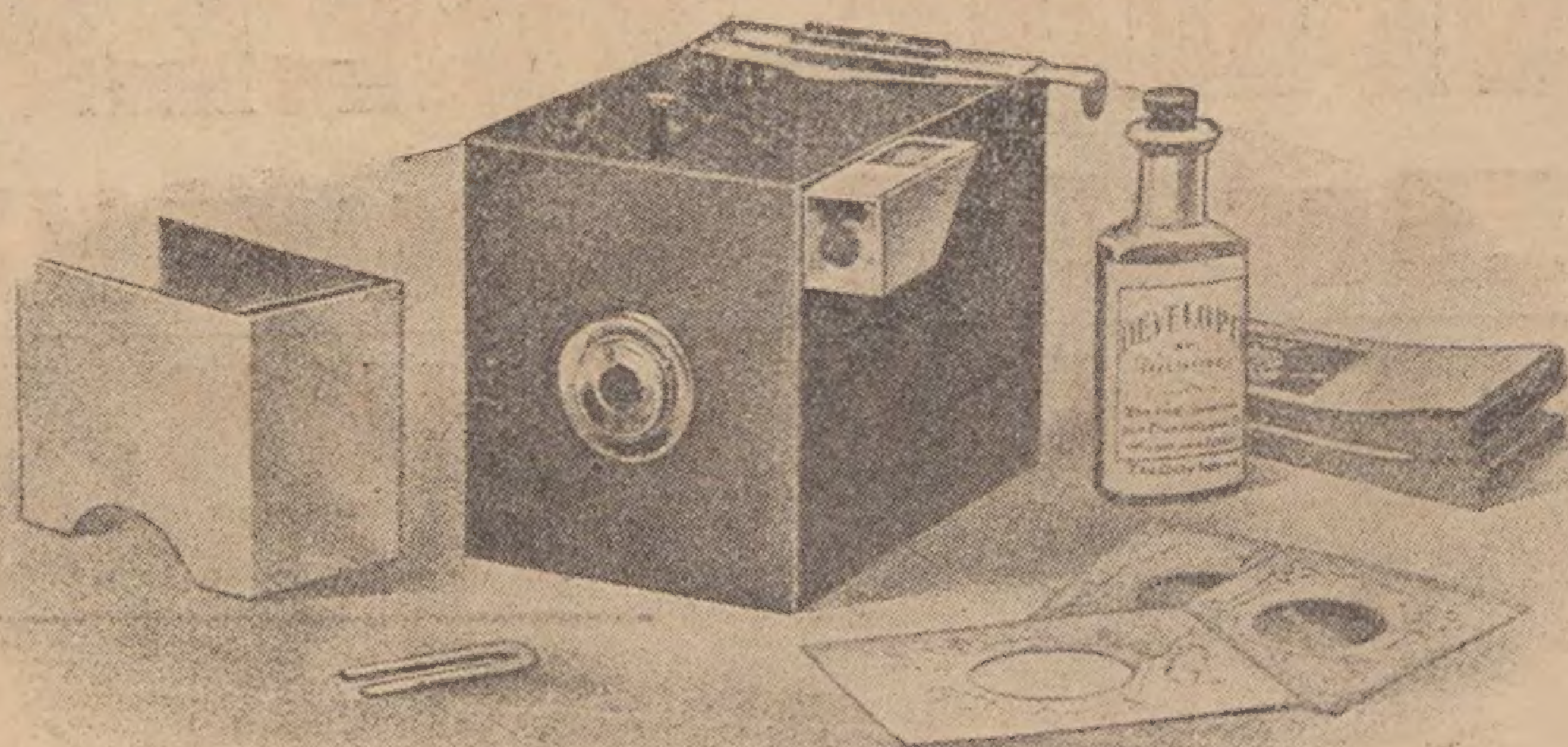
"Off with you!" snarled the driver, forcing Dick backward. "Do you want to kill me?" cried the boy, clinging to his burly aggressor. "Hold on, there, what are you doing?" shouted Duke, running beside the truck with arms extended.

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STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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PRICE 5 CENTS.

Dick and His Chum

OR,

MAKING A FORTUNE FOR THE FIRM

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

DICK AND HIS CHUM.

"What are you going to do now, Dick? Your uncle's sudden death has upset all your calculations, hasn't it?" said Duke Darrell to his chum, Dick Ransom, as the two boys stood on one of the wharves of the little town of Buckport, on the shore of Lake Erie.

Dick did not reply for a moment or two, then he turned and looked Duke in the face.

"Want to go into partnership with me?" he said, in a business-like tone.

"Into partnership!" exclaimed Duke, in some surprise. "In what kind of business?"

"Ransom & Darrell, Cargo Contractors. Office, Judson's Wharf. How would that sound?" said Dick.

"Do you mean that you intend to run your late uncle's business on your own hook?"

"On both our hooks, if you will go in with me."

"But I have had no experience at it, and you haven't had a whole lot."

"Don't let that fact worry you. I know enough about the business to run the risk of tackling it."

"But it will take more capital than we can raise between us."

"Not as much as you think. I only intend to keep the two hands——"

"But according to the regulations you've got to have a captain."

"You are to be captain at the start off, otherwise the

scheme goes up. You are perfectly competent to take the job. You served a year's apprenticeship on the schooner Jason. Then you took the examination for mate, and backed by Captain Fox's influence you got your certificate. That gives you authority to act as captain, doesn't it?"

"Yes."

"Very good. That will save the firm the wages of a skipper, and that's a very important item just now, for my late uncle's business, I have discovered, is rather on the hog, to use a slang expression, and it will be a case of economy and hustle to build it up again. The fact is since wages have gone up, and freights have come down, my uncle had a hard time making ends meet."

"I suppose you have spoken to your aunt and she is going to let you have the use of the schooner for whatever you can afford to pay?" said Duke.

"I have agreed to give her \$50 a month, and that carries with it the contract to take scrap iron across the lake to Clapham, in Canada. Well, are you with me in this thing?"

"Sure I am."

"Then we'll have the partnership papers drawn up in the morning. As soon as that has been attended to we will have a sign painted and attached to the shed my uncle used for his office, and get out some business cards, and put a standing advt. in the paper, and arrange to have the scrap iron brought down to the wharf, and have it put aboard, and——"

"Hold on. How much money do you expect me to put in? I've only got \$125."

"Put that in and I'll match you with a like amount."

"That will give us a working capital of \$250. If we can't worry along on that we'd better give up the ghost at once."

"You're going to keep the two hands who belong to the schooner?"

"Yes. They're good chaps and will pull with us. I'll speak to them, as the firm is an accomplished fact."

"And Captain Jinks will have to look for another job?"

"Naturally, as we have no use for him."

"He ought to have no trouble in getting one, for he knows his business."

"Very likely."

"Have you said anything to him yet on the subject?"

"No. Time enough to break the news to him when we have started the firm."

"He's living aboard the schooner, isn't he?"

"No; he's stopping at the Bates House, but most of his traps are aboard the vessel."

"He must have money to put up at a hotel. I wonder why he does it when he can stop on the schooner just as well as not?"

"I couldn't tell you. It's only lately he's been developing this bit of extravagance—since he's been taking the schooner across to Canada and back."

"Your uncle didn't pay him any more for those trips than for sailing the vessel to Cleveland, or other ports on this side, did he?"

"I don't imagine that he did. Why should he? He got so much a month for his services as skipper. It would make no difference with him where he took the schooner," said Dick.

"He received his wages just the same, I suppose, if the vessel missed a cargo and stayed tied up at the wharf?"

"Of course he did."

"How long has he been in your late uncle's employ?"

"About four months. Ever since he was let go by Thompson & Co., of Erie."

"Why did Thompson & Co. let him go?"

"He claimed he wanted a raise and they said they couldn't afford it."

"If that was the reason I don't see how he could do better by shipping with your uncle. If business wasn't good with him, as you say, he couldn't afford to pay fancy wages to Captain Jinks."

"I think the question of wages was not the cause of his severing his relations with Thompson & Co., for my uncle paid him less than he got from the Thompson firm. The fact was, as I saw it in an Erie newspaper at the time, he was suspected of smuggling some cases of brandy from the Canadian side."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. The schooner he was master of was engaged for some time in carrying coal across to Clapham, Thompson & Co. having secured a big contract to deliver the coal on the other side of the lake. The custom house officials at Erie got wind of the fact that small quantities of cognac were introduced on this side, duty free, and their investigations led to the seizure of the coal schooner on suspicion. A search, however, failed to disclose anything irregular about her, but Thompson & Co. had reason to feel much annoyed over the unfavorable publicity they were subjected to in consequence. Captain Jinks declared to a reporter

that the action on the part of the Government was an outrage, and he hinted that it was incited by a man in the revenue service he was at enmity with. Thompson & Co. threatened to bring suit against the Government, but after an interview with the chief inspector of the district, they changed their minds, apparently, for no suit was brought. It was about this time that Captain Jinks quit Thompson & Co. because he alleged that he wanted more pay and couldn't get it."

"Do you think there was anything in the matter with respect to the captain?"

"I couldn't tell you. As far as the facts went there was nothing to show that he had smuggled anything across the lake, but still the fact that he left the employ of Thompson & Co. on the heels of the affair might strike a person as rather significant. From what I have seen of him since he's been with my uncle, I can't say that I like the man."

"He's made two trips across the lake for your uncle, which seems to show that Mr. Judson did not take much stock in the alleged smuggling business," said Duke.

"That's right, but a revenue official has been on the wharf watching the schooner when she got back here each time," replied Dick.

"It's their business to do that, anyway, isn't it?"

"Yes, I guess so."

"You've got a load of scrap iron, you say, to take to Clapham. When the vessel returns an inspector will be on hand just the same as if Captain Jinks was in command."

"What's the difference? You're not going to try to smuggle anything across the lake."

"I should say not. I'm not looking for trouble."

"Say the firm, for if you were caught at anything like that I'd be in it with you. Well, let's go home. It's time our suppers were ready. Tell your folks what you're going to do. I'll inform my aunt that we have come to an agreement to run the business. To-morrow we'll charter the schooner from her in due form for six months, with the privilege of a renewal."

The two boys then left the wharf, which, like the schooner, was a part of the Judson estate, and walked up the street.

A couple of blocks above the wharf they parted, after making an engagement to meet at nine on the following morning, and each went his own way.

CHAPTER II.

CAPTAIN JINKS.

When Dick reached the cottage of his late uncle, Mr. Judson, where he lived, he found Captain Jinks in the little parlor talking with his aunt.

The skipper had called to find out what Mrs. Judson was going to do with the business.

If she was going to dispose of it, with the schooner, he proposed to take it off her hands himself.

In fact, his main purpose was to persuade her to sell out to him at a reasonable figure.

If she couldn't make up her mind to do that right away, he intended to charter the schooner, and rent the use of the wharf, so that he could run the business himself.

He did not expect there would be any other bidder in

the field, and was rather taken aback when the lady told him that her nephew, Dick Ransom, had proposed to run the business if he could arrange with a friend of his to go in with him.

Captain Jinks was disappointed.

As he did not have a very high opinion of Dick's business abilities, he told the widow that he thought it was ridiculous for her to enter into any business arrangement with an inexperienced boy.

The business would probably go to the dogs and she would be the loser.

Mrs. Judson said she was willing to take a chance in order to try and help her nephew along.

Her husband, she said, had brought him to Buckport with the view of eventually turning the business over to him, and she believed he was entitled to a chance now that her husband's death interfered with the original arrangement.

Then Captain Jinks had a luminous thought.

The boy would, of course, retain him as skipper—at least he figured so, since it would be necessary for him to have a captain on the schooner.

Having the inside track, in a way, he could manage to put the business on the "bum," which would disgust the boy and cause him to throw it up.

Then he (the captain) would doubtless be able to buy out the widow on still more advantageous terms.

So Captain Jinks changed front and agreed that Mrs. Judson was doing the right thing in giving her nephew a chance to show what he could do with the business.

The conversation had reached this stage when Dick appeared.

He bowed to the captain, and the captain got up and shook hands with him in a friendly way.

Mrs. Judson left them together while she went to see how the hired girl was getting on with supper.

"Mrs. Judson has just told me that you are thinking of taking charge of your late uncle's business," said the skipper, with an encouraging smile.

"Yes, sir," replied Dick.

"I don't know but it is a good idea, for you seem to be a smart boy, and you have acquired some insight into the business since you came here."

"I have an idea I can get along—or rather that the firm will get along."

"Then you have secured a partner?"

"I have."

"Some man experienced in the business?"

"No, he's a boy like myself, but he is fully competent to attend to his end."

"Oh!" smiled the captain, quite pleased to find that he would not have a man to buck up against. "Another smart young fellow like yourself, I suppose?"

"He's as smart as they come, in my opinion," replied Dick.

"I suppose it will take you a few days to get things into shape."

"I guess we will be able to get into shape by to-morrow night. There is a load of scrap iron going over to the Clapham foundry. The sooner it gets off the better. I don't believe in going to sleep over a contract."

"Quite right, young man," replied Captain Jinks, effusively. "When do you think of putting it aboard?"

"To-morrow afternoon, if nothing prevents."

"Very good. I will be on hand to see that it is loaded all right."

"I think your month is up to-morrow noon, isn't it, Captain Jinks?"

"Yes."

"You had no arrangement with Mr. Judson as to your terms of service, I believe. He told me that he hired you from month to month."

"That's right. I'll sign with you on the same terms, or I'll sign a three or six months' engagement to remain with you for that time. Six months would suit me best, as I've just had a good offer from Thompson & Co., of Erie, to return to them. I wouldn't like to put you in a hole by leaving abruptly when you needed my services, so if you will draw up a paper engaging me for six months I'll stay with you, notwithstanding the fact that Thompson & Co. have offered me higher wages."

The captain looked as if the milk of human kindness was irradiating from all his pores, and that he really considered it a pleasure to make a personal sacrifice in the interest of the new boy firm.

"I'm very glad to hear that Thompson & Co. are after you," replied Dick, though privately he doubted the skipper's statement. "I advise you to close with them at once."

Captain Jinks stared at Dick in a dumfounded kind of way.

This wasn't what he had expected.

He had been merely putting up a bluff in order to impress the boy with the idea that it would be to the new firm's interest to enter into a term engagement with him to run the schooner.

Then he would be in a good position to carry out his private purpose.

"What do you mean?" he sputtered, the smile dying out of his weatherbeaten countenance.

"I mean that you had better take up the offer you say Thompson & Co. has made you," answered Dick.

"But you need a captain for your schooner," said Jinks.

"I know that. I have got one in sight."

"Have you made arrangements with somebody else without consulting me?" cried Captain Jinks, looking angry now.

"What difference does that make to you? You have a better offer which you have only to accept."

Captain Jinks fairly glared at the boy.

"But I prefer to remain with you," he said.

"That is impossible. My partner is going to take charge of the schooner, and that will save the firm the wages we otherwise would have to pay you. My uncle's business was not flourishing, and I wouldn't undertake to run it unless I could economize."

"I don't think it's a fair deal you're giving me. I'd be willing to come down in my wages to stay with the schooner."

"Why should you want to do that when Thompson & Co. has offered to take you back?"

Captain Jinks felt that he had committed himself, and

that fact made him all the more disgusted with the situation.

He hardly knew what to say. Finally he blurted out:

"The offer had a string to it that I didn't like, and I was going to turn it down anyway."

"I am sorry," said Dick; "but the plain fact is we can't afford to hire you."

"Why can't you, if I make it an object to you?"

"My partner holds a certificate as mate, and it is for the interest of the firm for him to run the schooner," replied Dick.

"I don't believe the Board will allow a boy to take full charge of the vessel."

"Why not, if he's competent to do so?"

"That will have to be proved."

"A trip or two on the lake will prove it."

"Then you don't intend to have me?"

"Under the circumstances the firm will have to dispense with your services. You had better remove your things to-morrow when you call at the office for your pay, otherwise we'll have to send them to you at the hotel."

Captain Jinks muttered an imprecation under his breath and walked jerkily up and down the room with his hands in his pockets.

Dick could see that he was as mad as a hornet, but he couldn't help that.

He had no use for the skipper as the case stood.

"You may regret this, young man," said Captain Jinks, darkly.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Dick, quickly.

"If your partner should lose the schooner through inexperience your business would come to an abrupt end," was the reply.

"As he is equally interested in the firm with me he will take more than ordinary care to see that he doesn't lose her. At any rate, I'd as soon trust her to him as any captain on the lake. He's thoroughly competent to sail any fore-and-after that floats."

"You're making a great mistake, but that's your lookout," said the captain, grabbing up his hat.

At that moment Mrs. Judson came in and told Dick that supper was ready.

She invited the captain to stop and partake of it.

He declined the invitation, saying he had an engagement, and made a hasty exit.

Dick and his aunt then adjourned to the dining-room.

CHAPTER III.

STARTING BUSINESS.

On the following morning Dick and his chum met as agreed and proceeded to the office of a lawyer who had done some business for the late Mr. Judson.

Dick introduced himself and his friend, and stated the object of his visit.

The lawyer drew up a partnership agreement in duplicate for them, and both signed the papers in his presence.

The boys then each took a copy and started for the wharf where the schooner lay.

They went aboard and Dick called the two hands into the cabin.

One was a young Irishman named Tim Flynn, the other a rather raw lad known as Fritz Hoogfeldt.

Tim was a good sailor, but Fritz was only learning the business.

Dick had done both of them several favors, and they were ready to stand by him through thick and thin.

They knew Duke in a general way as Dick's particular friend, and they liked his genial, hearty manners.

Before the arrival of the boys they had been discussing the possibility of being obliged to look for another berth.

They had an idea that Mrs. Judson would dispose of the business and the sloop, now that her husband was dead, and that would probably throw them out of a job.

"Tim," began Dick.

"Yis, sor," replied Flynn, feeling that something was coming.

"And Fritz, I wish to let you both know that Duke and myself have this day entered into a partnership to take over my late uncle's business and run it ourselves."

"Hurroo!" cried Tim, evidently quite delighted, for it indicated that his job and Fritz's were safe for the present.

"In the interest of economy we have had to let Captain Jinks go."

"Begorra, I'm glad of thot, ain't you, Fritz?" said Tim.

"Yaw, I ped you," replied the Dutch youth, without any visible emotion.

"And who are yez goin' to have for skipper?" asked Tim.

"Duke will be the captain, and have full charge of the schooner. He has passed his examination and holds a mate's certificate. He is well acquainted with the lake, having served two years on board Captain Fox's schooner, as you know. He is perfectly competent to run the vessel."

"Begob, thot's foine. That suits you, doesn't it, Fritz?"

"Yaw, I ped you," replied Fritz, impassively.

"Your wages will go on just the same, and I expect you both to do the best you can for the success of the new firm."

"Be the poker, it's mesilf that's willin' to wurruk like a nagur for yez," said Tim, enthusiastically. "And Fritz will do the same, won't you, Fritz?"

"Yaw, I ped you."

"That's all," said Dick. "Now step up and get your last month's wages."

They stepped up and were paid.

"I'll bet the cap'n didn't loike to lose his aisy job," said Tim.

"He told me that he had an offer to go back to Thompson & Co., of Erie, but I don't take any stock in that statement," said Dick.

"Do yez know, Mister Dick, thot if yez kept him aboard yez would run a chance of trouble wid the revenue inspectors," said Tim, with a mysterious wink.

"How is that?" asked Dick.

"I belave he intinded to do a little smugglin' on the quiet."

"What makes you think so?"

"Bekase on the last trip, faith, he sounded Fritz and me on the subject, so he did."

"He did?"

"Yis, sor. Didn't he, Fritz?"

"Yaw, I ped you."

"What did he want you to do?"

"Well, sor, he said there was a power of money to be made by gettin' cog-nack into the States from Ca-narda free of juty."

"He told you that, eh?"

"Sure he did."

"And how did he propose to accomplish it? He couldn't land it here in Buckport without getting caught, and then the three of you would fetch up in jail."

"He didn't intind to land in Buckport."

"Where then?"

"Sure that's a saycret he wouldn't till us."

"He wanted you chaps to stand in with him on the scheme and keep your mouths closed?"

"Thot's it. He said we'd make three toimes what we were gettin' in wages."

"What did you tell him?"

"I towld him we'd consider it. Thot was to gain toime so I could tell the ould man, your late uncle, I mane; but, rist his sowl, he was dead whin the schooner got back, so I held me peace till I saw how the cat was goin' to jump wid our jobs."

"Well, Captain Jinks will have to do his smuggling in some other craft, for he's out of this one for good. It seems evident to me now that the smuggling business he was suspected of while in the employ of Thompson & Co., of Erie, has some foundation, in fact. I guess he ran one or more batches of French brandy on his schooner before his operations were taken note of, for he seems to be well supplied with money. He must have received warning not to bring any on his last trip, for when the inspectors boarded the vessel a mile from shore, and made a search of her hold and cabin, nothing subject to duty was found aboard."

"I guess he's a foxy old rooster, and hard to catch," said Duke.

"Well, come on, Duke, we have business to attend to. I want you to go to the printer's and order some business cards for the firm. I'll make out a copy at the office. You must also see a sign painter and give him an order for a wooden sign to attach to the top of the shed. I'll wait around the office for Captain Jinks to call for his pay, then I hope he'll carry off his duds that are on board the schooner. After I have finished with him I'm going to call on the house that gave my uncle the contract to carry the scrap iron across to Clapham, and see about getting the stuff down here early this afternoon. As soon as it is delivered, Tim, you and Fritz must get a hustle on and put it into the hold," said Dick.

"Yis sor," said Flynn. "Fritz and me'll attind to thot, won't we, Fritz?"

"Yaw, I ped you," replied the Dutch youth.

Dick and Duke left the schooner.

"Say, Dick, that's a funny lad," said Duke. "Why does

he always say 'Yaw, I ped you?' Why doesn't he vary it a little?"

"He doesn't know much English, though he and Tim seem to understand each other first rate. As he knows you and I are not familiar with the Dutch language, he hasn't much to say."

"Will he understand me when I order him to do something on the schooner?"

"I guess so, if you illustrate your meaning with a sign. At any rate, if you pass the order to Tim he'll make Fritz understand it."

Fritz, however, knew a whole lot more English than Dick thought.

He was rapidly picking it up from Tim, for they were as thick as peas in a pod.

"Yaw, I ped you" was merely the first English words that Fritz put together, and he repeated them until the expression got to be a habit with him.

The boys went to the little shed at the head of the wharf which bore a tin sign of "OFFICE," and entered.

It contained a small safe, two desks, half a dozen chairs, and other necessary furniture, including a small stove to keep the place warm in the winter.

Dick sat down at the desk he had occupied while working for his uncle and wrote out the following copy for the printer:

RANSOM & DARRELL,

CARGO CONTRACTORS,

Office: Judson's Wharf,

Schooner Polly.

Buckport, N. Y.

"There, order 500 cards with that on it," he said to his partner. "Then go to a sign painter's and leave an order for a one by four sign. The lettering will be 'Ransom & Darrell, Cargo Contractors,' in white letters on a black surface."

"All right," said Duke, and he started off on his mission.

Fifteen minutes later Captain Jinks made his appearance.

"Morning," growled the skipper, in a sulky way.

Dick counted out his wages and pushed a receipt toward him to sign.

The captain signed it and took his money.

"Are you going to pack up your things now and take them away?" asked Dick.

"You seem anxious to get rid of me," replied Captain Jinks, in an unpleasant tone.

"You mustn't take it that way. The fact is as the schooner will probably sail late this afternoon my partner wants to bring down his own traps and put the state-room in order.

"Humph!" grunted the captain. "I'll go aboard, pack up and send my belongings to the hotel."

"Do you expect to return to Thompson & Co.?"

"No, I don't," replied Jinks, with some energy.

Then he passed out of the office and walked down to the schooner.

"He's sore on me for fair," chuckled Dick, looking after him. "Well, it isn't my fault. Ransom & Darrell aren't in

business for Captain Jinks' benefit. At this stage of the game we've got to keep expenses down as low as possible. As Duke is a good skipper himself, and I can handle the shore end, what use has the firm for Captain Jinks? None at all. Besides, his weakness for smuggling makes him decidedly undesirable. I trust when he leaves with his duds that we won't see him again."

But the firm, individually and collectively, was destined to see more of Captain Jinks than they cared for.

When Duke returned and announced that he had attended to his two commissions, Dick said they would go to the savings bank and draw out the amount each was to put into the firm.

The greater part was then deposited in another savings bank by Dick under his own name, as they were not old enough to be accepted as depositors in a business bank.

After that Dick called on the business house which had contracted with Mr. Judson for the conveyance of the scrap iron across the lake, and left word that it be sent to the wharf as soon as possible, as the schooner was to sail that p. m.

While Dick was thus engaged, Duke was getting his traps aboard the vessel.

The iron was duly delivered in rough bags, and Tim and Fritz rushed it into the hold with the aid of a block and tackle.

About the middle of the afternoon the telephone bell in the office rang and Dick answered it.

An occasional customer of Mr. Judson's wanted to know if the schooner was going to sail soon.

"Yes, sir; late this afternoon," replied the boy.

"Is she going across to Clapham?"

"She is."

"Then I should like to send a couple of cases to a store in Oldport."

Oldport was a Canadian town about ten miles east of Clapham, and it would be an easy matter for the schooner to put in there on her way to Clapham.

"We'll take them, sir," replied Dick.

"Same rate as before, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir. Deliver the cases on the wharf as soon as possible."

He was assured that they would be sent down at once.

Hardly had he hung up the receiver before the bell rang again.

"Well, who is this?" asked Dick.

"Johnson & Co., of Washington street. Is this Judson's office?"

"Yes. What can we do for you?"

"Is your schooner going over to Clapham this week?"

"Going late this afternoon."

"Can you take a load of crated crockery if we send it down right away?"

"How much of a load?"

The party specified number, size and approximate weight.

"Yes, I guess we can make room for it."

"What will you charge us to deliver it on the Clapham wharf?"

Dick mentioned the amount based on the man's statement.

"All right. Send in your bills as soon as you get the goods, so we can mail the originals to-night."

Dick said he would and rang off.

"We're going to do better this trip than we had any idea of," he thought, with much satisfaction. "This extra freight that we did not count upon will be so much clear gain. Ransom & Darrell are beginning well. May our luck continue."

Just as darkness was falling over lake and shore the Polly schooner pulled out from her berth on her first trip for the new boy firm of cargo contractors.

And Dick, standing on the wharf, watched her gradually recede from Buckport, with the cheerful reflection that he was in business for himself at last.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SEA NYMPH.

Next morning Dick visited the printer to see if the cards were done, and was told they were being struck off at that moment.

"Then I'll wait for them. It won't take long, I suppose," he said.

"Fifteen minutes, perhaps," was the reply.

So Dick waited, seated by a window which overlooked a side street.

The clicketty-clack of a couple of job presses, going at full speed, reached his ears, partly drowned at times by the pounding made by an energetic stone-hand in planing down a large form.

Then came the rumble of a cylinder press starting up, and Dick could feel the floor of the wooden building quiver from its vibrations.

While Dick sat there he saw Captain Jinks and a well-dressed man come out of a saloon on the other side of the way.

They remained talking awhile on the sidewalk, and the young cargo contractor watched them, though without any particular curiosity.

The skipper's companion was a stout, red-faced man with bushy sidewhiskers.

He wore a heavy gold watch-chain across his vest, with a seal dangling from the buttonhole where the chain looped up.

He stood with the flap of his coat thrown open and his thumb inserted in the arm-hole of the vest.

Altogether, he gave Dick the impression that he considered himself a person of considerable importance.

The boy had never seen him before, but he was sure that he would recognize him if he ever saw him again.

Finally the captain and the stout man parted, each going in the opposite direction.

A shabby-looking man, who had been hanging in an apparently aimless way around the side entrance of the saloon building, suddenly straightened up and started at a rapid pace after the stout man.

His transformation from a careless loafer to an individ-

ual of energy attracted Dick's notice, and he watched him as long as he was in sight.

"I never saw a person change so quick as that fellow did," thought the boy. "I wonder what struck him? Looked to me as if he was after the man the captain was talking to. Perhaps he intended to touch him for the price of a drink? Yet it could hardly be that, for he might have braced both him and Captain Jinks while they stood in front of the saloon. Well, it's nothing to me at any rate."

Presently the printer brought Dick a package of cards, with a specimen of the job on the outside.

The work was perfectly satisfactory to the boy, who paid for it and left.

Then he went around to see the sign painter.

The man was just putting the finishing touches on it.

It looked all right, and Dick told him to fetch it down to the wharf and put it up when it was dry.

The young cargo contractor then made his way to the wharf and entered his office.

He took a bunch of cards out of the package and put them in his pocket.

Then he sat down at his desk and wrote out the following advt., which he intended to insert in the Buckport Daily Argus:

RANSOM & DARRELL,
CARGO CONTRACTORS,
Office: Judson's Wharf.

Full cargos of freight carried at exceptionally low rates and with despatch on the fast schooner Polly to any port on Lake Erie. Low rates to Canada. Insurance arranged for. Terms on application. Telephone, No. 632.

Half an hour later Dick went to the newspaper office and arranged for standing publication of the advt., then he started to make a tour of certain manufacturers who shipped their goods by water to lake ports.

About four o'clock he returned to the office and was surprised to see Captain Jinks sunning himself in front of the door.

The captain nodded in a friendly way to the boy.

He seemed to have got over his grouch.

He followed Dick into the office.

"Ransom," he said, "I've got a berth."

"I'm glad to hear it," replied Dick, but wondering why the skipper should come around to tell him about it.

"I'm going out on a gentleman's yacht. He has engaged me to run the boat for the rest of the summer. It's what I call a soft snap," said the skipper.

"Soft snaps are not easy things to catch on to. Allow me to congratulate you on your good fortune," said Dick.

"I called to see if I can berth the yacht at your wharf when she's in port," said the captain. "The gentleman expects to pay for the accommodation. I thought I'd give you the chance to make a little extra money."

"I have no objection to renting docking privileges, but I don't suppose you will use it much," replied Dick.

"Not a great deal, for we will be out on the lake most of the time; but the owner wants a regular place where he can lay up at when he comes ashore to attend to business matters. Now name your figure and I will pay you some-

thing in advance. I'll bring the yacht around in the morning."

Dick set a reasonable price and the captain nodded his acceptance.

"Give me a receipt for \$10," he said.

Dick wrote it out and Captain Jinks passed him over the bill.

The skipper then lighted another cigar and asked the boy what he had in view for the schooner when she returned from Clapham.

"Nothing as yet, but I have two or three days in which to scare up a cargo," answered Dick.

"You ought to get along, for your expenses are small. You get the use of the schooner for nothing, I dare say."

"No, we don't. We have hired the vessel, as well as the wharf, from my aunt at a fair rental. She is entitled to as much from us as anybody else would pay her."

"She won't push you for payment if you should get behind," said the captain, blowing out a cloud of smoke.

"We don't intend to get behind if we can help ourselves. We have capital enough to give the business a fair trial. If we can't make it go we'll get out of the field."

"Just so," said the captain, flicking the ashes from the end of his cigar. "Well, I guess I'll be going. You'll see the yacht around here in the morning."

"All right, sir. Good-afternoon."

At that moment the telephone bell rang.

One of the men he had called on that day wanted to see him at his office right away.

"All right, sir, I'll be over directly," replied Dick, hanging up the receiver.

He put on his hat and locked the office.

The result of his visit to the shipper was a fair-sized cargo of goods to be delivered on the wharf at Port Edward, in Canada.

He secured it by underbidding two other cargo contractors, which he was able to do owing to the light expense he was under in comparison with his rivals.

Dick told him he expected her back the following day.

When the young cargo contractor went down to the office on the following morning he saw a small sloop-yacht making in for the wharf.

Captain Jinks was aboard of her directing the crew of two, and by his side stood the stout, red-faced man Dick had seen talking to him opposite the printing office the day previous.

The boy wondered if this person was the owner.

He looked prosperous enough to be so.

Dick stood at the door of the office and watched the boat come alongside the wharf.

As soon as she was made fast Captain Jinks and the stout man retired to the cabin.

Shortly afterward the stout man stepped ashore, walked up the wharf, and then took his way up the street.

Dick went to his desk and was busy with his books when the telephone rang.

A shipper, who had seen his advt. that morning in the Argus, wanted to know something about his rates to Erie.

He said if he quoted low enough figures he would put something in his way.

Dick told him to hold the wire while he looked up his uncle's rates.

When he found what Mr. Judson had been charging he made a cut under that and so informed the shipper.

"All right," was the reply. "I will communicate with you in a few days."

As Dick hung up the receiver Captain Jinks walked in at the door.

"Good-morning, Ransom," he said. "I suppose you saw me bring the yacht in?"

"Yes," replied Dick.

"Come down and take a look at her," said the skipper.

Dick had no objection to doing that, so he locked up and accompanied the captain.

"She's a fine looking boat, don't you think?" said Captain Jinks as they stood on the wharf and looked at her symmetrical proportions.

Dick admitted that she was.

"She can go some, I can tell you," went on the skipper.

"She looks as if she was fast," said Dick.

"There's nothing under sail on the lake that can match her in speed except her twin."

"Why, is there another like her around here?"

"She has a duplicate somewhere on the lake, I couldn't say where. This one is called the Sea Nymph," said the captain, calling Dick's attention to the name on the stern.

"The other is the Sea Foam. They're as like as two peas in a pod. Come aboard."

Captain Jinks showed Dick all over the yacht.

She was handsomely fitted up, and Dick judged she had cost a good price.

Her name was not only displayed on the stern, but on both sides of her sharp bows, and also on the front of her cabin, above the door facing forward.

The skipper called his attention to the name several times, and frequently referred to the Sea Foam as resembling her even down to the smallest particular.

"We may lie here several days or we may leave on very short notice," said Captain Jinks, when they stopped on the wharf again. "It all depends on the owner's business or whim."

"Was that stout, red-faced man the owner?" Dick asked.

"Yes. His name is Grasp—D. B. Grasp. He's worth a lot of money."

"I should imagine he was well fixed to own such an expensive boat."

"That's a mere bagatelle. He could buy a dozen like it if he wanted to and not miss the money."

The captain left Dick at the door of his office and returned to the yacht.

When the young cargo contractor left his office close to sundown that afternoon there were no signs that the boat would leave her moorings soon.

When he got down next morning he saw that she was gone.

CHAPTER V.

TROUBLE ON A TRUCK.

About eleven o'clock that day the Polly came in to the dock.

Dick saw her through the window and he rushed down to meet her.

To his surprise he saw that she carried a deck load of lumber.

Duke had evidently picked up a return freight, and his partner was tickled to death over his luck.

He wondered what Duke had received for bringing the load over.

His partner was not familiar with the scale of prices at the office, for Dick had had no time to post him.

However, it didn't matter.

Whatever he had arranged for was practically clean gain, for Dick had expected the schooner would come back without a cargo.

She had certainly made good time with such a heavy load aboard, but that was because the wind was strong and in her favor all the way across.

Duke waved his hand to Dick, and so did Tim and Fritz, when they saw him coming down the wharf.

He responded and waited impatiently for the schooner to reach the dock.

"Hello, Duke," shouted Dick, when the vessel was within easy hail, "I see you have brought over a load of lumber."

"And a hold full of shingles," cried Duke back.

"Gracious! How did you manage to get it?"

"I'll tell you when we get alongside the wharf."

At that moment Dick saw a custom house inspector coming down the dock.

He knew the man, having met him often since he had been with his uncle.

"A load of lumber, Ransom," said the inspector, when he came up.

"Yes, sir, and my partner says he has shingles in the hold," replied Dick.

"Your partner!" exclaimed the inspector, in some surprise.

"Yes, sir. Didn't you see our sign above the office?"

"I didn't take special notice of it. Did your uncle leave you his business?"

"No, but it was understood between us that I was to become his partner after a time, and that eventually the business would come to me."

"His death brought things about quicker than you expected, eh?"

"Yes, sir. I made an arrangement with my aunt to take the business off her hands altogether, provided I could get my friend Darrell to go in with me. He was willing to join hands, and so we buckled up the other day. He's a licensed mate, and is now acting as skipper of the Polly. That saves us the wages of a regular captain. A penny saved is a penny earned, you know, and everything counts when one starts out for himself."

"That's right," nodded the inspector.

Duke now stepped on the wharf and Dick introduced him to the revenue official.

After a short talk all three boarded the schooner and Duke produced the cargo manifest, which showed to whom it was consigned, its declared value at wholesale, and other matters connected with the shipment.

One of the documents was handed to the inspector.

Its truthfulness had been attested before a notary on the

other side, and the inspector saw it had been executed in the proper form.

"By the way, Ransom, how came that yacht to moor at your wharf yesterday?"

"Why, the owner has arranged with me to let her come in here till further notice," replied Dick. "He's a wealthy gentleman named Grasp. The arrangement was made through Captain Jinks, former skipper of the Polly. He is now captain of the yacht."

"Indeed. She had another captain when she came here from Erie, and anchored off Smith's Dock two days ago. I don't see what a pleasure craft like her wants the use of a dock for. Such craft usually anchor off in the stream. So her owner's name is Grasp. What's his first name?"

"D. B. are his initials."

"He's the senior partner of Grasp Brothers, importers and wholesalers of wines and liquors, of Erie. I dare say he's rich enough to own a small yacht."

"I was on board of the vessel yesterday. She's a splendid craft. Her name is the——"

"Sea Nymph; yes, I know," interrupted the inspector.

"Perhaps you've seen her twin?"

"Her what?"

"Her twin. Captain Jinks told me she has a duplicate exactly like her in every way but in name. She's called the Sea Foam."

"Never heard of her. I must look her up in the marine register."

"She's somewhere about the lake on a pleasure cruise."

"Very likely," said the inspector, dryly. "So Captain Jinks is the skipper of the Nymph now?"

"He is. He told me it was a fat berth. I should judge that it is. I'm glad he got it, for he felt sore at me for letting him go."

"Between you and me, Ransom, you did the right thing in changing skippers on the Polly," said the revenue man.

"Why do you say so? Because he was suspected by the government a few months ago of smuggling while in the employ of Thompson & Co. of Erie?"

"There was good ground for suspicion. The revenue officials failed to catch him with the goods because he doubtless received warning on the other side of what was going to happen."

"Surely he never attempted to land liquor at Erie on the sly?"

"Oh, no. He knew better than to try it. The government has good ground for believing that he landed two lots of cognac at some spot along the lake shore on return trips from Port Edward. At any rate, Thompson & Co., after a conference with the chief inspector, deemed it prudent to let him go."

Dick might have informed the inspector about the overtures Captain Jinks made to Tim and Fritz while he was skipper of the Polly, to stand in with him on contemplated smuggling operations, but concluded not to do so, seeing that the captain had secured a good berth and was not likely to find a chance to engage in any smuggling business for the present.

When the revenue man went away to report the arrival of the Polly with a load of lumber and shingles, Dick asked his partner for a report of his trip to Clapham.

Duke said he had made a quick trip across and put in at Oldport to land the two cases of goods.

He then continued on to Clapham, where he discharged the crockery and the scrap iron for the foundry.

Before he had completed this he was waited on by the agent of a big lumber company of that place.

Owing to a disagreement with the cargo contractors who had been carrying their product to Buckport and other places in the States, their output had been held up.

Learning that the big cargo contractors had entered into a joint agreement to raise the rates on lumber and other articles connected with the trade, the company decided to try and find an independent firm which would carry their product at the old rates.

The agent had a talk with Duke and told him there was a fine chance for his firm to get the contract at the old rates.

He suggested that the head of the firm come over and see the president of the lumber company about it.

Duke encouraged the agent to believe that the firm would take up the matter.

The agent then wanted him to take a load over anyway at the old rates, and as an inducement offered him free loading for that consignment, which the company was anxious to get across to Buckport.

Duke accepted his proposition, for he saw a very good profit in the transaction, so the Polly was brought around to the company's wharf and loaded with great dispatch.

"Now, Dick, I think you'd better go across with me on the next trip and close a contract with the company before somebody else gets their hooks in," said Duke. "It is true our firm has a ten-day option on the contract, which I secured from the agent as an inducement to carry the cargo, but we are not in a position to fight the company if it should find it to its interest to throw the option out."

"What's the matter with you closing the contract yourself? As a member of the firm you can do it as well as I can," replied Dick.

"Well, I think the company would rather deal with the head of the house. Besides, it is such an important contract that I might put my foot in it somehow, not being up in the business like yourself. You can get your cousin Tom to look after the office while you're away. In any case you won't be gone long," said Duke.

Realizing that it would be a big thing for the firm to secure the contract with the Canadian Lumber Co., Dick agreed to go across.

"I have a cargo waiting to go to Port Edward, so we'll have to get the lumber and shingles on the dock without delay. The Buckport Lumber Co. will doubtless arrange with the custom house as soon as we notify them of the arrival of the cargo, and send their teams to take it away before we have got it all out of the schooner," said Dick.

A gang of men was hired at once to help Tim and Fritz unload the Polly, and Dick notified the shipper, who had arranged to send a moderate cargo to Port Edward by the Polly, that the schooner was at her wharf unloading and would shortly be ready to take his merchandise on board.

The shipper, whose name was Davie, replied that the goods would be sent to Judson's wharf after one o'clock.

That day Ransom & Darrel ran against their first snag.

One of the cargo contractors who had been underbid for the Port Edward consignment was so mad over losing the order that he determined to try and get back at the new firm.

He put up a job, with the help of one of his employees, to prevent the goods reaching Judson's wharf when they were expected.

The employees called around and saw the driver of the truck which was to do the hauling.

A couple of glasses of whisky and a \$5 bill won the driver over, and he agreed to carry the loads to the dock of the rival firm instead of to Judson's wharf.

To further complicate the matter the goods were to be loaded on one of the firm's schooners.

All this would cause delay and trouble, and the rival contractors hoped that in the end they would carry the consignment across on their own terms.

It happened, however, that a friend of Dick's overheard the arrangement made in the liquor saloon with the driver and tried to notify Dick by 'phone.

Dick and Duke were home at dinner at the time and he couldn't reach the former.

Feeling that the matter was a serious one, he started for Dick's house.

He met Dick and his chum on the way back to the wharf and told his story.

"That's what I call a rascally trick," said Dick. "We must put a spoke in it, at once. Come along, we'll go around and see the shipper about it. The driver will probably lose his job, but that will serve him right."

They turned around and started back.

A heavily laden team was coming down the street.

Dick saw it bore the name of the shipper who was to send the goods by the Polly.

"I'll bet that's the first load intended for the schooner. Instead of going to see Davis we'll follow the truck and see if the driver really intends to carry his load to the Bradley Wharf instead of to ours," said Dick.

"All right," agreed Duke.

So they hustled along close in the wake of the truck, which was proceeding leisurely.

Two blocks further on the driver turned to the left instead of to the right as he should have done if he was going to Judson's wharf.

"That settles it," said Dick, in a tone of energy. "We must stop his little game in the bud, Duke, and make him turn around and take the right direction."

Dick sprang forward and shouted to the driver.

The man, who did not know him, reined in to see what he wanted.

"You're going the wrong way with that load," cried Dick.

"What's that?" replied the driver, aggressively.

Dick repeated his words.

"Who the thunder are you, anyway?" snarled the driver.

"I'm Ransom, of Ransom & Darrell. That load you have there is one of several intended for our schooner, lying at Judson's wharf. You're not bound in that direction, so turn around, as you have no time to lose."

"Go to the dickens!" cried the driver, starting his team on again.

Dick saw that the fellow intended to keep on, so without more ado he seized one of the spokes, climbed up on the side of the truck and moved around to the seat in front.

"Look here, you do as I tell you or I'll notify Mr. Davis right away and you'll catch it in the neck when you get back."

"Get down or I'll smash you!" replied the driver, who was a husky chap, and he looked bad just then.

"No, I won't get down. I'm on to your scheme to take this load, as well as the others, to the Bradley wharf. If you want to save your bacon you'll turn around and go the right way."

"Blame you, you young imp, I'll fix you!" roared the driver, furiously, dropping the reins and seizing Dick by the arms.

The horses, alarmed by the racket, started ahead at a quicker gait.

"Off with you!" snarled the driver, forcing Dick backward.

"Do you want to kill me?" cried the boy, clinging to his burly aggressor.

"Hold on there, what are you doing?" shouted Duke, running beside the truck with arms extended.

The driver paid no attention to his remonstrance, and the situation looked pretty desperate for Dick.

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER A BIG CONTRACT.

It is hard to say what the outcome would have been, for the driver was half drunk and in a dangerous humor, if a policeman hadn't noticed the condition of things, and running out into the street, seized hold of the horses and stopped them.

That gave Duke the chance to jump up to the assistance of his chum.

He grabbed the driver by the throat and forced him back on the seat.

"You big ruffian, what do you mean by attacking my partner in this cowardly way?" he cried, angrily. "Let go of him, do you hear, or I'll have you taken to the station-house, and then you'll be charged with murderous assault."

Duke's words only made the driver more furious, and releasing Dick, he caught hold of Duke.

They struggled around on the seat in great danger of falling over into the street.

Dick lent his aid to his partner, and smashed the driver two or three times in the face to make him let go of Duke.

The scrap attracted considerable attention from passers-by, who stopped to look on, but none offered to interfere.

The policeman called on a bystander to hold the horses, which he had stopped, and then jumped up on the wagon.

"What's all this trouble about?" he demanded.

The sight of the officer partially sobered up the driver.

"It's the fault of them chaps," he said, sullenly.

"That's a lie," replied Dick. "This young fellow and I are cargo contractors, with an office on Judson's wharf. There is our business card. This truck is loaded with

merchandise from George Davis, of Bank street, and intended to be sent across the lake to Port Edward on our schooner. You see the direction he was taking, don't you? He should have turned the other way to go to Judson's wharf. We happened to be on our way back to the office when we saw him turn into this street. So I hailed him and told him he was going the wrong way. He paid no attention but kept on. I jumped on the truck to remonstrate, and then he attacked me and tried to throw me off. That's the cause of the trouble."

"Were you bound for Judson's wharf?" asked the policeman of the driver.

"Maybe I was," growled the man, cowed by the officer.

"Don't you know where you are driving? If you don't I'll have to run you in as drunk and disorderly."

"Yes, I know where I'm going," replied the driver, sulkily.

"This isn't the way to Judson's wharf. If you're bound there you'll have to turn around and go that way," said the policeman.

"All right, sir. Whatever you say," returned the driver.

"Do you want to make a charge of assault against this man?" asked the officer of Dick.

"Not if he'll turn around and drive the right way," replied the boy.

"I'll drive to Judson's wharf," said the man.

"See that you do," said Dick. "I'll go with you."

Seeing that the case was apparently adjusted, the policeman got down, and so did Duke.

The driver sullenly turned his team and started on again.

"Maybe I'll get square with you for this," he said, darkly, to Dick.

"I wouldn't make any threats if I were you. If I report your conduct to Mr. Davis you know what is likely to happen. I know all about the arrangement you made with an employee of Phipps & Morris to queer our firm on this shipment. You were a fool to side in with those people, for you would certainly have lost your job when Davis heard about the matter."

"I was promised a job with Phipps & Morris at higher pay," replied the man, sullenly.

"Oh, you were? And for that reason you were willing to play your present employer a dirty trick. Now look here, when you've dumped this load on our dock are you going to bring the others here or have we got to watch you? Sooner than take that trouble I shall telephone Mr. Davis at once from our office."

"I'll bring the goods all right if you won't say anything."

"All right. I'll give you the chance to make good. If you keep your word then Mr. Davis won't learn through us that you tried this crooked game."

"I'll do the right thing," said the man, now thoroughly subdued.

The truck soon reached the wharf and the goods were unloaded at the most convenient place not already taken up by the piles of lumber and stacks of shingles that had come off the Polly.

The truck driver brought the rest of the consignment in due course, but the last load arrived late on account of lost time.

Dick and his partner, however, kept the force of long-shoremen to finish the work, paying them overtime rate in consequence, as they wanted to get the schooner away without loss of time, for much could be gained by starting that evening instead of holding over till the next forenoon.

Dick went home to supper, and then arranged with his cousin to look after the office while he was away.

Dick had his supper on board with Tim and Fritz.

Tim was the cook, and he wasn't a bad one.

Fritz could also cook after a fashion, having picked up the rudiments of it by watching the Irish lad.

The loading was finished about dark, Dick paid the long-shoremen off, and the hatch was put on and secured.

On the stroke of nine the schooner pulled out from her wharf and headed across for Port Edward.

It was a fine starlight night.

A light breeze just ruffled the surface of the lake and wafted them along at a slow rate—all too slow for Dick, who was anxious to get across as soon as possible, settle the contract with the lumber company, and return to the office.

"We're doing a whole lot better than we expected at the start," said Duke, as the young partners paced the deck from the rise of the low cabin roof to the open scuttle forward whence access was to be had to the combined fore-castle and galley.

Tim was at the wheel and Fritz was resting below, for he had to relieve Tim at midnight.

"Yes," replied Dick. "We've started in fine. The load we have aboard is an unexpected one. So was the cargo you fetched across. If we secure the contract I am going over to close, we may consider that the business has all the ear-marks of success."

"Seems funny that opening with the Canadian Lumber Co. should happen just at the time when we are ready to snatch at it, doesn't it?"

"Such opportunities are likely to crop up any time. What firm was doing their business?"

"Jepson & Co."

"That is the biggest firm of cargo contractors in Buckport. You say that this firm and several others have combined to force a raise in freight rates?"

"So the agent of the lumber company told me."

"And the lumber company kicked? Naturally a rise in charges would hit them hard, for they ship a large amount of their product across to Buckport and other towns in the States. The combine must have come to an understanding with all the other cargo contractors of any importance in order to feel confident of winning out. They didn't consider the late Mr. Judson's outfit as worth their attention. That is where they are likely to lose the Canadian Lumber Co., one of their best customers—that is one of Jepson & Co.'s best customers. If we corral that contract there is going to be a howl from Jepson loud enough to make things hum in Buckport."

"What can they do about it?"

"Denounce us as cheap skates."

"What do we care for that? Competition is the life of trade."

"It used to be, but the up-to-date method is to stifle competition in order to work the squeeze game."

"I know. That's why the prices of everything, even the necessities of life, have been rising steadily for the last ten years or more. I suppose the combine will try to force us out of business, but I don't see how they can do it. We've got a wharf, and we've got a schooner. How are they going to down us?"

"I don't know. My aunt has a clear title to both, and she is not likely to listen to any overtures, however flattering, that have for their object the busting up of our firm. We will probably receive offers to sell out to Jepson & Co.; or to come in with the combine."

"What good would that do the opposition? If we sign a contract with the lumber company they would have to stand by it if they took our business over, and we'd have to stand by it if we went into the combine."

"We're not going to sell out, nor are we going into any combination. Our firm is going to remain an independent one, just as we started," said Dick.

"That's right," agreed Duke. "Whatever you say goes with me."

By daylight next morning the Polly was close in to Port Edward, and an hour later hauled into the wharf she was accustomed to lie at in Mr. Jydson's time.

After breakfast several hands were secured to help Tim and Fritz discharge the cargo, which was duly inspected by the Canadian custom house officers, to whom Duke furnished a copy of the cargo manifest.

The consignees were notified of the arrival of the goods, and then it was up to them to take charge of it after settling whatever charges was on it.

It was after dinner before the Polly left the dock en route for Clapham.

She reached that port before dark and came to anchor in the stream opposite the town.

Dick judged that it was too late to see the head of the Canadian Lumber Co., but he decided to go ashore and see what the place looked like.

Of course, Duke was ready to go with him, and they got Fritz to put them ashore in the small boat.

They walked around the town for an hour and then entered a restaurant to get their supper.

Here a surprise awaited Dick.

They were in the midst of the meal when, looking casually around the large dining-room, the boy's eyes rested on a table apart from the others.

Here, dining together, he saw Captain Jinks, D. B. Grasp, the stout, red-faced owner of the yacht Sea Nymph, and a well-dressed gentleman, who looked like a Frenchman.

They reached the dessert stage, and were drinking, smoking and talking together in great good humor.

CHAPTER VII

IN A FOG.

"Say, Duke," said his chum.

"Hello," replied that lad, looking up.

"Who do you suppose is eating here?"

"We are," grinned Duke.

"I mean who else that we know, or rather I know?"

"Give it up. Have you spotted some friend from Buckport?"

"Captain Jinks."

"You don't say. Where is he?"

"At that table yonder."

Duke turned around and looked.

He knew Captain Jinks by sight, and recognized him.

"He's in pretty swell company," he said.

"The stout man, with the red face, is D. B. Grasp, of Grasp Brothers, Erie, Pa., the owner of the yacht Sea Nymph, so we may conclude that the vessel is anchored somewhere in the basin."

"He's the chap that the revenue inspector said was in the liquor business?"

"Yes."

"The other gentleman is a Frenchman, I'll bet. He's got the mustache and imperial that so many of them wear. He's the swellest-looking of the bunch."

"The captain certainly seems to have the snap he spoke of," said Dick.

"I should remark. Mr. Grasp is democratic in his tastes, I guess. Most rich yacht owners would not care to associate with the captain of their craft on terms of equality."

"Captain Jinks acts like a man who felt himself on a level with his companions. There's nothing backward about him. He didn't lose anything because I let him go from the Polly, though he felt pretty mad over it at first."

"A fellow can never tell what he may fall into in this world. Lots of people drop into better jobs after being sacked. It ought to encourage a fellow when he's down on his luck to think that the dawn always follows the darkest hour."

"Not for every one, though the sentiment is all right. There they go now, the three of them, just like old friends who had come together after a long separation. It was the Frenchman who paid the bill, so I suppose the captain and the yacht owner were his guests."

The three persons in question passed out of the restaurant without Captain Jinks becoming aware that his presence in Clapham had been noted by Dick Ransom and his chum.

It was dark when the boys left the restaurant.

They walked around town an hour longer, seeing the sights by gas and electric light, and then repaired to the wharf where Tim had been ordered to meet them with the boat at nine o'clock.

A fog had settled down over the lake since dark, and it had worked its way in to the Canadian shore and hung like an opaque mantel over the wharves.

Under such conditions the boys, who were not very well acquainted with the water front, got kind of mixed up in their bearings, and as a consequence they got on the wrong dock.

They looked for the boat and failed to find her.

"Tim ought to be here, for it's after nine," said Dick.

"Maybe he couldn't find the right wharf in the fog," said Duke.

"I didn't think of that. What shall we do if he doesn't show up? Hunt up a boatman to take us off to the schooner?"

"That's what we'll have to do."

"The question will be where shall we find one?"

"Do you see that misty red light yonder?"

"Yes."

"That's a dram shop. I heard that they hang out there, day and night, when they're not on the docks."

"We'll wait awhile and give Tim a chance to find the wharf."

"Come to think of it, are we on the right wharf ourselves?" said Duke.

"I couldn't swear to it, but it seemed to me that we came straight enough."

"We'd better make sure. Suppose you wait here till I run up to the drinking house and inquire?"

"All right. Run along. You'll find me right here when you get back."

Hardly had Duke's form vanished in the fog, which grew denser every minute, than a cab rolled down on the wharf and proceeded slowly till it got near Dick.

Then it stopped and three persons got out.

The cabby turned his rig around but did not go away.

The three men were clearly feeling good, and had evidently been drinking freely.

They talked louder than they probably intended, and their tones easily reached Dick's ears.

He had no difficulty in recognizing them as Captain Jinks, Mr. Grasp and the aristocratic-looking Frenchman.

"It's a beastly night," said Grasp.

"Couldn't be better, Mr. Grasp, for our little enterprise. You can't see a yard ahead of your nose, consequently no inquisitive agent of the American government will be likely to see the goods come off to the Sea Foam to-night."

"Sea Foam," thought Dick, "the captain has got names a bit mixed. He means the Sea Nymph, of course. But what does he mean by saying that no inquisitive agent of the American government will be likely to see the goods come off to the yacht. What goods does he refer to? Can this be another smuggling enterprise? It looks like it. If so, how happens it that the wealthy Mr. Grasp is apparently mixed up in it? I shouldn't imagine he'd care to take the risk of getting into trouble with the revenue authorities. And the Frenchman! He must be interested in the business, too, otherwise he wouldn't be hand-in-glove with the skipper and Mr. Grasp. I seem to have made quite a discovery."

"That's all right," hiccupped Mr. Grasp, in reply to the captain's remarks; "but if there is no wind to take us across we'll have to stay here till to-morrow night."

"Oh, I think the wind will spring up along toward midnight. The Sea Foam is a swift sailer, and will take us to Cooper's Cove in three hours in any kind of a decent breeze. As long as we get there before daylight we'll be all right, and if the tail end of the fog hangs along the American shore to cover our movements the more, so much the better," said Captain Jinks.

"The main thing, monsieur," said the Frenchman, addressing Grasp, "is to get the goods on board your yacht without observation, then no tell-tale dispatch can be sent over to warn your government of the run. It is these secret service men who are the greatest difficulty in the way. They have my place spotted, for they know that I have many American customers for cognac, and that it is noth-

ing to me if those who purchase my goods try to get it into the States free of duty."

"Monsieur Castaing is right, Mr. Grasp. The chief thing is to get the liquor aboard the yacht without the fact becoming known," said Captain Jinks. "A pleasure boat may go anywhere without question. If her owner chooses to anchor in Cooper's Cove, or off Indian Head, no one will take special notice of the fact. Still we have provided against all contingencies. Suppose a Secret Service agent spots a consignment of liquor being put aboard the Foam, he will notify the chief inspector on the other side of the fact, and the Foam will be watched for. But if the Nymph is later seen making for an anchorage somewhere along the shore she will not be suspected, because the Nymph has not been seen in Canadian waters, although the very picture of the Foam," and the captain ended his speech with a chuckle.

"Why all this talk, Captain Jinks? We have gone all over that before. Where is the boat from the yacht that was to meet us at this wharf?" said Mr. Grasp.

"She has not yet arrived. I fancy we are rather early," replied the skipper.

"Confound it! Must we hang around this wharf for an indefinite time? The fog is thick enough to choke me. I told you to have the boat here by nine o'clock, and it must be half-past that hour now," cried the owner, in an irritable tone.

"I left the order with Robertson, and he is not a man to neglect his duty, sir."

"Then why isn't the boat here?"

"The fog is probably the cause of it. It's not easy to fetch the right wharf in a mist that one can cut with a knife," said Captain Jinks.

"That is quite true," agreed the Frenchman.

"And how about finding the yacht after we leave the wharf?" said Mr. Grasp, who seemed to be working himself into a bad humor. "Are you sure it will not be as bad as hunting for a needle in a haystack?"

"No fear of that, Mr. Grasp," replied the captain, reassuringly. "Robertson will bring a small compass with him, and will take the bearings of the yacht before he leaves her. That will enable us to make the Foam as easily as though there was no fog."

"Here is your man now, monsieur," said the Frenchman, observing a figure in the fog close at hand.

Captain Jinks turned around and looked in the direction indicated by the Frenchman.

"Is that you, Robertson?" he asked.

No reply came from the figure, which drew back further into the mist.

The captain's suspicions that they had a listener were suddenly aroused.

He made a dash for the intruder and succeeded in grabbing him by the arm.

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?" he asked, sharply, as he noted the fact that the interloper appeared to be a boy.

"I'm waiting for a boat from our schooner," was the muffled reply.

"A boat from your schooner—what schooner?"

"An American schooner, if you want to know. This is Barnaby's dock, isn't it?"

"No, it isn't," snapped the captain; "it's Central Wharf."

"Then I'm on the wrong spot. Let go my arm and——"

"Not before I see who you are, young man. You may have overheard talk not intended for your ear. Come with me," and he dragged the boy over to the spot where his companions stood.

"Is that Robertson?" asked Mr. Grasp.

"No it isn't. It's a boy who says he was waiting for a boat from his schooner. I'm afraid he's been listening to our talk, and we've been saying things not intended for the ears of a stranger. He may be in the employ of the Secret Service people for all we know. Have you got a match-safe, monsieur? If you have I wish you'd strike a light and let us see who this chap is."

"If you want to know who I am, Captain Jinks, you needn't strike a light to find out," put in the boy.

"Ha, you know me?" cried the captain, with a nervous thrill.

"I ought to, as I've seen you often enough in Buckport."

"Your voice sounds familiar. Who are you?"

"I'm the head of the firm of Ransom & Darrell."

"What!" roared Captain Jinks, aghast. "You're not Dick Ransom?"

"I'm nobody else, Captain Jinks. Aren't you glad to see me?"

As he spoke the Frenchman flashed a match, and through the halo of light that hung for a few moments in the fog, Dick Ransom's face stood out quite clear and distinct, proving that he was without doubt the person he claimed to be.

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK IS OFFERED A BRIBE.

"Dick Ransom!" exclaimed Captain Jinks, thoroughly astonished. "What brings you to Clapham?"

"What do you suppose, captain? Business."

"Business!"

"Yes, and very important business, too."

"Does that account for you being on this wharf, in the fog, at this hour?"

"Incidentally it does. As I told you, I am waiting for a boat from the Polly, which is anchored off yonder somewhere. The boat was to call for my partner and myself at nine o'clock, at Barnaby's dock."

"This is not Barnaby's dock," said the captain.

"I thought it was until you told me just now that it was Central Wharf. That accounts for the fact that the boat hasn't shown up, though I've been waiting these twenty minutes for it. I believe the adjoining wharf to the right is Barnaby's. As I am in a hurry to get aboard the schooner I'll wish you good-night if you will remove your grip from my arm."

"One moment, Ransom. You say you've been here twenty minutes?"

"About that time."

"You were here when that cab arrived, eh?"

"I was."

"And you saw us get out of it?"

"I did."

"Have you been listening to our talk?"

"I couldn't help hearing some of it."

"How much did you hear?"

"Well, I heard a good part."

"Then you know what we've been talking about?"

"You've been talking about your yacht, the Sea Nymph, though you seemed to mix her up with the Sea Foam, which you told me in Buckport was her twin—as near like her as one pea to another."

"What else?"

"Why inquire? You know what you were talking about."

"This young man evidently is acquainted with our plans," said Captain Jinks, turning to his friends. "What are we to do about it?"

"Who is he? You seem to know him?" said Mr. Grasp, in a husky voice.

"You know that I ran the schooner Polly for Mr. Judson up to the time of his death?" said the skipper.

"What has that fact got to do with this boy?"

"This young fellow is Judson's nephew."

"Oh, he is?" said Mr. Grasp. "Then I suppose he's all right. He'll keep his mouth shut as a favor to you. I'll make it all right with him."

"You hear what Mr. Grasp says, Ransom?" said the captain.

"I heard him."

"Whatever you accidentally heard you'll keep secret about, won't you?"

"I never like to make rash promises," replied Dick.

"But you wouldn't injure me, would you?"

"I should be sorry if the truth injured you, captain."

"Mr. Grasp will pay you to hold your tongue."

"I'm not for sale, Captain Jinks."

"Oh, we're not trying to buy you. We are merely asking you not to mention what you heard to-night. As a young gentleman you are in honor bound to maintain strict silence about whatever you heard us say."

Dick remained silent.

He felt that his predicament was an embarrassing one.

His sense of duty told him that he ought to report the facts to the American revenue service; his sense of honor demanded the silence requested of him.

But these men were to engage in a dishonorable transaction themselves.

If he remained silent would he not thereby become a party to the act himself?

Why should his sense of honor compel him to act contrary to the dictates of his conscience?

He had not voluntarily enacted the part of a Paul Pry.

He was waiting on the wharf for the return of his chum, who seemed to have been away an unusually long time.

Under the conditions he could not be expected to move away from the rendezvous because these men came there of their own accord.

If they were so foolish as to talk about their secret affairs within his hearing that was their lookout; not his.

All this passed through Dick's brain in a very brief space of time.

Thought is as swift as a flash of light, almost, at times.

"Well," said the captain, "you agree with me, don't you? You understand that it would be very dishonorable on your part to disclose private conversation unavoidably overheard by you?"

"I think that depends on the nature of the conversation," replied Dick.

"How so?"

"If a person overhears others discussing the execution of a dishonest scheme against individuals or the government, isn't it his duty to warn the party at whom the conspiracy is aimed?"

"Do you mean to say that we were discussing a dishonest project?"

"Is it honest to try and defraud the American government of its revenue dues?"

"Young man," broke in Mr. Grasp, in a blustering way, "don't you know that the excessive protective tariff exacted by the American government is an outrage?"

"It may be, but I don't see that we need discuss that fact. The government having seen fit to levy a certain tariff on brandy, for instance, any person who tries, by secret means, to evade the payment of that tariff, is practically trying to cheat the government out of what it is entitled to collect. Can you deny that?"

Mr. Grasp stared at Dick as well as he could through the fog.

The boy's argument seemed to be a clincher.

"Hem! What special interest have you in the American government, young man?"

"The same interest that you, a citizen of the country, is expected to have, sir. We are both bound to obey its laws and regulations."

"I suppose you expect to make something by putting the revenue authorities on to our plans?" sneered the yacht owner.

"That fact didn't occur to me, sir," replied Dick, calmly.

"No? You wish me to understand that it is simply a case of conscience on your part, or duty, as you remarked just now."

"You can call it what you like."

"Suppose I hand you a \$100 bill, would that satisfy your scruples?"

"No, sir. I don't take bribes."

"Hem! I'm not offering it to you as a bribe, but as a present."

"I'm not entitled to any present from you."

"But if you will engage to say nothing about what you overheard on this dock, I will give you the \$100 as an evidence of my appreciation of your discretion."

"It would be to all intents and purposes a bribe for me to hold my tongue, so I must refuse to accept it."

"Well, what are you going to do about this matter?" snorted the yacht owner.

"That will depend on what you do."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you intend to try and smuggle a quantity of cognac into the States with the help of your yacht, the Sea Nymph?"

"My yacht, the Sea Nymph, is not in Canadian waters, therefore it would be impossible for me to use her in a smuggling enterprise."

"Not in Canadian waters! Then how happens it that her skipper, Captain Jinks, is in Clapham?"

"I brought him over here to take temporary charge of my friend Castaing's yacht, the Sea Foam."

"Oh!" exclaimed Dick. "Then you propose to use the Sea Foam for your smuggling venture?"

"If we make the venture the Sea Foam will be used; but, since you have overheard our plans, it is likely that we will give it up, or at least postpone it to some future occasion. It wouldn't pay us to take any desperate chances. There isn't money enough in it."

"It's a wonder you would use a vessel so like your own that if the revenue authorities got wind of your intentions they might make trouble for the Sea Nymph," said Dick, who did not believe Mr. Grasp was telling the exact truth.

"Suppose I have no choice in the matter? In any case the revenue people are at perfect liberty to overhaul my own yacht whenever they see fit. They will find nothing aboard of her that will incriminate me."

At that moment another person appeared on the scene.

It was Duke Darrell, who had been away a long time.

He approached the group, and Dick recognized him through the fog.

"Here I am, Duke," he said. "Gentlemen, this is my partner, Mr. Darrell."

The appearance of Duke was not relished by the trio, but they did not give any evidence of the fact.

"This is Mr. Grasp, owner of the yacht Sea Nymph; Mr. Castaing, a resident of this town, and Captain Jinks, whom you know in a general way," went on Dick.

"Glad to make your acquaintance, gentlemen," said Duke. "I suppose you are waiting for a boat to take you off to the yacht?"

"If you refer to the Sea Nymph, she is not on this side of the lake," grunted Mr. Grasp, in a sulky way.

"We are waiting for a boat to take us off to Mr. Castaing's yacht, the Sea Foam," said Captain Jinks.

"Oh!" exclaimed Duke, in some surprise. "Seeing you here, captain, I supposed, as a matter of course, that the Sea Nymph was in the harbor."

"Hem! Quite natural. For reasons which I need not explain Mr. Grasp decided to leave the Nymph at anchor off Indian Head and come here by rail. He brought me with him for company's sake," said the captain, glibly.

Another figure was now seen approaching from the end of the dock.

It proved to be Robertson, who had been belated by the fog.

Captain Jinks recognized him.

"Got here at last, have you?" he said.

"Yes, sir. We had to feel our way in the fog."

"Well, Mr. Grasp, are you ready to go aboard?"

"Yes."

"We wish you good-evening, young men," said the captain, turning to the boys.

That was a plain hint for them to go.

"Good-evening," replied Dick. "Come along, Duke. How about our boat?"

"It's waiting for us at the next wharf. This is Central Wharf."

"So Captain Jinks told me."

"We made the mistake in the fog and darkness," said Duke. "Barnaby's Dock is next to this in that direction," and the speaker waved his arm.

"I know. Glad we made the mistake."

"Why?" asked Duke, in some surprise.

"I'll tell you when we get in the boat."

"I suppose you refer to the fact that you met Captain Jinks and got an introduction to his swell friends?"

"Yes, I refer to the coming of that party to this wharf. They arrived in the cab you saw standing there directly after you left."

"I noticed the cab, for it passed me," said Duke.

"I guess the Frenchman is going away in it as soon as he has bidden the others good-by."

Just as they reached the head of the wharf and turned to the right the cab dashed by them, and turned off to the left along the water front.

Barnaby's Dock was only a few yards distant and the boys were soon upon it.

Duke led the way to the steps that ran down to the water, and there they found Tim with the boat.

In a few minutes they were afloat, and, guided by a compass, which the Irish lad had taken the precaution to bring with him, they were soon on the way to the schooner.

CHAPTER IX.

DICK DISPLAYS HIS PROWESS.

"What do you suppose I discovered after the arrival of those men on Central Wharf?" said Dick.

"I give it up," answered his chum.

"Those men are about to run a quantity of cognac across the lake in the yacht and try to smuggle it into the States at some point known only to themselves."

"You don't mean it!" cried Duke, in astonishment.

"Listen, and I'll tell you how I found the scheme out," said Dick, who proceeded to tell Duke all that happened in his hearing on Central Wharf.

"Well, I'll be jiggered. So they caught you, and then tried to bribe you to keep mum. What are you going to do?"

"I'll have to consider. I hardly think they'll attempt to carry their plan out now that they know I'm on to it, and what my attitude on the subject is."

"You can't tell what they'll do," said Duke. "This is just the night to get a lot of goods aboard a vessel without the fact leaking out. It is clever of Mr. Grasp not to employ his own yacht on this shady enterprise. It is clear that he brought Captain Jinks here to sail the Frenchman's boat to the place decided on for landing the goods."

"I'm not sure that Mr. Grasp is not going to employ his own yacht," said Dick. "I have only his word and the captain's that the Sea Nymph was left anchored off Indian Head, which lies on the State line between New York and Pennsylvania. How do we know that the Frenchman is the

owner of the Sea Foam, or that that yacht is within fifty miles of this place? It was to the interest of those men to try and deceive me as much as they could."

"That's right," nodded Duke. "The Sea Nymph may be here after all."

"I'd be willing to bet something that she is," said Dick.

"I'd like to prove it."

"So would I, but that is out of the question in this fog. We don't even know where the yacht, be she Foam or Nymph, is anchored."

"We may learn in the morning if the calm keeps up, for it will be impossible for her to get away without a breeze of some kind."

"Then I hope the calm holds. I'd like to satisfy my curiosity about that vessel."

"You've been aboard of the Sea Nymph, and should know her like a book."

"But if she and the Foam are twins there is only one way to tell one from the other."

"What is that?"

"By her name, of course. The Sea Nymph has hers in four places—on the stern, over the cabin door facing forward, and on either bow. It is probable that the Sea Foam has hers displayed in a similar manner, and probably in the same kind of lettering. If the calm holds we can row around in the morning and locate the yacht. Then we will be able to satisfy ourselves as to her real identity."

"That's a good idea," said Duke, as the boat ran alongside of the Polly.

They turned in soon after they got aboard and were shortly asleep.

When they turned out in the morning the sun was shining and the air was as clear as a bell, but not a breath of wind was stirring.

While waiting for breakfast Dick got the telescope and surveyed the shipping in the little harbor for the purpose of finding out where the yacht he was interested in lay, for it seemed pretty certain that she had not been able to leave her anchorage during the night.

Duke joined him and inquired if he had made her out.

"Yes, there she lies yonder near the point, but too far off for us to see her name even with the aid of this spy-glass," replied Dick.

"Then we'll have to row over there," said Duke.

"That would attract their attention, and they would feel sure I was up to something."

"How are you going to learn her name—by inquiring along the water front?"

"We could do that, of course, but I'd prefer to get my knowledge at first hand. I've an idea."

"What is it?"

"There won't be much use of our going to the office of the Canadian Lumber Co. much before ten. After breakfast we'll take a stroll over on the point, and that should bring us close enough to the yacht to be able to make out her name with the naked eye."

"First rate. We'll do it. It will be a nice walk for us, and besides we'll be able to see what the country looks like beyond the town in that direction," said Duke.

So the matter was decided and they fell to talking about

their chances of catching the lumber carrying contract, which was bound to prove a good thing for the firm.

Dick was afraid that the fact that they were both boys would operate somewhat against them.

It was an important contract, and the lumber company would want to deal with what they considered a responsible firm.

"But we carried one load over for them all right and in good shape," said Duke. "That ought to show that we can fill the bill."

"One swallow doesn't make a summer, old chap," replied Dick. "The company was anxious to get that load across and were willing to take chances to do it. It is quite a different matter for them to bind themselves to an agreement to employ us regularly. Naturally they will want to know who they are dealing with."

"From what the agent said it appeared to me that it was a dead sure thing for us to get the contract."

"Did you tell him that the head of the firm was a boy like yourself, and a year younger?"

"No, I did not. I merely told him that I guessed our firm would be perfectly willing to accept the contract on the company's terms. I said I would bring you over to talk the matter up with the company, and sign the papers if the deal went through."

"Doubtless he expected that I was a man, who had been in the business for years. As he saw that you were in charge of the schooner he may have thought that you were not a member of the firm—only a salaried namesake of Darrell."

"I told him that I was the tail end of the firm, and I promised to put the matter up to you."

"Which you have done. Well, we must trust to luck. I'll give the president of the company a good game of talk, and try my hardest to land the contract."

Tim called them to breakfast and they went into the cabin to eat it.

After the meal was over, Dick called Fritz and requested him to row Duke and himself to Barnaby's dock.

The boat was floating astern and the Holland boy pulled it around to one side.

Ten minutes later Dick and his chum stood on the dock.

They started at once for the point, taking in the water front sights on their way.

In the course of three-quarters of an hour they were walking out along the shore of the point.

At last they got as close to the yacht as they could go, and they made out her name on her stern quite plainly.

It was the Sea Foam.

"Well, are you satisfied?" asked Duke. "The captain and the owner of the Nymph did not lie after all when they said that the Nymph had been left on the other side of the lake."

"I'm glad I've seen the Sea Foam. She certainly is the dead image of the Sea Nymph. Leaving out the name, I defy anybody to tell them apart. Why, I'll be blessed if she hasn't even got the long scratch in her stern-post that I noticed the Sea Nymph have."

"That's funny. I wonder how she could get a similar scratch in the same place."

"Don't ask me. It's carrying the likeness to the limit, I

think. However, as long as there are two yachts of twin construction, that is evidently the Foam."

"Say, look here, what evidence have you that there are two twin yachts, anyway? Have you looked them up in the Marine Register?"

"No. The best evidence I have is the fact that I am looking at a yacht now that is the dead picture of the Sea Nymph, and is not the Sea Nymph. Apart from that I have only Captain Jinks' word and what Mr. Grasp said last night."

Duke rubbed his chin and looked thoughtfully at the water.

He was about to say something when suddenly a girlish scream echoed through the morning air behind them.

"Something is up," cried Dick, making a dash for the top of the point, closely followed by his chum.

They heard no further outcry, but when they reached the summit a stirring spectacle met their eyes.

A daintily-dressed girl was struggling in the arms of a trampish-looking rascal.

She had evidently ridden out to the spot, for a saddle-horse was standing close by, looking at what was transpiring before him.

Dick judged that the man had pulled the girl from her saddle, which gave rise to the scream.

He now held one hand tightly pressed across her mouth to prevent her repeating her cries.

Dick didn't stop to consider what he should do.

He dashed at the rascal with compressed lips and smashed him twice in the jaw in rapid succession, making his teeth rattle like a pair of castanets.

The fellow was not prepared for so vigorous an attack and was forced to let the girl go in order to defend himself.

Dick went at him hammer and tongs, for he felt sure the scoundrel could offer no valid excuse for his conduct.

The rascal was bigger and huskier than the plucky young cargo contractor, but the boy's skill in the art of self-defence more than equalized the difference.

He put it all over the chap inside of two minutes, so that the ruffian was glad to take to his heels, and he did not stop running as long as he remained in sight.

The girl had watched the conflict with bated breath, her admiration for her bold young rescuer growing with each blow he struck at the author of her predicament, and when the rascal threw up the sponge and fled she rushed up to Dick and seized him by both hands.

"How can I thank you sufficiently for your brave efforts in my behalf," she said, earnestly, giving him a look that made his blood beat more quickly than usual.

She was an uncommonly pretty girl, and her flushed face and sparkling eyes added to her natural beauty.

"You are welcome, miss," replied Dick, rather flustered by her engaging manner, and the brilliant eyes that gazed into his in such an impulsive way.

"What a plucky boy you are!" she continued, admiringly. "And to think that you actually put that man to flight. Won't you tell me your name?"

"Dick Ransom. I'm an American, and I live in Buckport, New York, on the lake. This is my chum and part-

ner, Duke Darrell. Perhaps you will let us know who you are?"

"My name is Vivien Grey, and I live in Clapham, or rather on the outskirts of the town. You are on a visit to this place, I presume?"

"Yes, a short visit, on business."

"I should be pleased to have you call on me before you return if you can find the time. I know my father and mother would be glad of an opportunity to thank you for rescuing me from that tramping man, who, but for your opportune arrival, would have robbed me of my purse and such jewels as I have on my person."

"I am not sure that I will be able to find the time unless you would care to see us this afternoon. We expect to return to the States before night."

"If you will say what time you will call I will be at home."

"Say three o'clock."

"Very well."

"Now you will have to tell me how we are to find your home. We are strangers here and not familiar with the town."

The girl gave him explicit directions which he was sure they would be able to follow.

Then he assisted her to mount her horse, and she rode off waving her hand to both the boys.

CHAPTER X.

THE TURNDOWN AND WHAT FOLLOWED.

"She's a corking fine girl, Dick," said Duke.

"Bet your life she is," replied his partner, looking after her.

"You've made a hit with her."

"What good will that do me? After to-day a wide lake will lie between us."

"There is nothing to prevent you from paying her a flying visit once in a while."

"Nothing, eh? You forget I have our business interests to look after in Buckport."

"A fellow will strain a point when there's a pretty girl in the case," laughed Duke.

"Oh, she'll soon forget all about me."

"I don't think so. She seemed to take a great fancy to you. And I don't wonder. Most girls admire pluck in a chap, and you certainly polished that ruffian off to the queen's taste. I was ready to help you, if necessary; but there was nothing doing for me."

"Well, let's start back for town. It will be ten o'clock by the time we reach the office of the lumber company."

An hour later, after inquiring their way, they reached the offices of the Canadian Lumber Co.

They were located on the second floor of an office building, one of the best business edifices in Clapham.

Walking in they were confronted by a clerk who brusquely inquired their business.

"We wish to see the president," said Dick.

"What do you wish to see him about?"

"We are cargo contractors of Buckport, N. Y., and we want to have a talk with him in relation to getting a contract to carry the company's output to the States," said Dick.

"Why you're only a couple of boys," sneered the clerk. "You haven't the ghost of a chance to get any contract from us. We want men to handle our business."

"We have already handled one load of your material, through an arrangement made by one of your agents in this town, and as we put that through all right, I guess we can handle your business as well as any man in the line," replied Dick, with as much dignity as he could assume.

"When did you carry this load you mention?" asked the clerk.

"Three nights ago."

"What is the name of your firm?"

"Ransom & Darrell."

"I will look the matter up."

"In the meantime we should like to see the president."

The clerk hesitated.

"I'll take your names in to him, but it isn't at all certain that he will see you."

"Why not? I thought this company was anxious to make a deal with an independent contractor," said Dick, handing him one of the firm's cards.

"We are, but the persons we arrange with must be perfectly responsible. We cannot afford to make permanent terms with people whom we are not sure we can depend on to carry out their engagements."

"If we make a contract with this company we'll carry it out to the letter. That's the way we do business," replied Dick.

"The president makes all contracts, and he will let you know if you stand any chance. I believe he is already considering offers from other independent contractors. Take a seat until I return," and the clerk walked away.

In a few minutes he came back and announced that Mr. Grey, the president, would see them.

"Follow me," he said, and the boys followed him into a well-furnished office, the door of which was marked "Private."

A fine-looking, middle-aged gentleman sat at a roll-top desk, examining some papers.

He looked up at their entrance and pointed to chairs near his desk.

"Am I to understand that you are the firm of Ransom & Darrell?" he said, holding the boys' business card in his fingers.

"Yes, sir," replied Dick.

"Which of you is Ransom?"

"That is my name," said Dick.

The president frowned slightly.

"How long have you been in business?"

"Not quite a week, sir," said Dick, feeling that this truthful admission was likely to spoil all their chances.

"What experience have you had in cargo contracting?"

"Several months, sir, with my uncle, the late Mr. Judson."

"Judson, eh? I've heard of him. So he was your uncle?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you have taken charge of his business, I suppose?"

"We have."

"What facilities have you for the traffic?"

"The schooner Polly, one of the fastest and stanchest vessels on the lake, and a wharf at Buckport."

"You have a lease of the wharf, I presume?"

"Yes, sir, for as long as we want it. It belongs to my aunt as also does the schooner."

"It seems to me that you are both young and as yet inexperienced in the business."

"That is true as to our years, and partly so as to our experience, but I can guarantee that if you will make a contract with us we will make good."

"What guarantee can you give?"

"Our words."

Mr. Grey smiled.

"I have no doubt you mean well, young man, but can you furnish a bond for \$10,000, with responsible sureties?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Then it is only a waste of time for me to consider your application. Our export trade to the States is very considerable, and we could not think of intrusting it to a firm of contractors who were not financially responsible."

"We carried one load for your company the other day. The arrangement was made through your agent. We put it though all right, and on your own terms, save that we got free loading, which I understand is not customary. Your agent explained to my partner at the time the trouble you were having to make a fresh contract with Jepson & Co. He said that all the important contractors had combined to raise the rates, and encouraged my partner to believe that we stood a good chance of getting a contract with this company at the old terms. That is what brought me over to see you."

"The fact that our agent hired your vessel for one load, or even had he done so for several, is quite a different matter from making a regular contract. As we would be obliged to keep our end of the agreement, it is necessary that we have a guarantee that you would keep yours. Since you cannot furnish the bond I mentioned I will be obliged to decline your offer."

The gentleman touched a bell and a boy entered the room.

"Show these young men out, William," he said.

Dick and his chum rose, bowed to the president and followed the boy outside.

At a window of the ante-room stood a young lady, who turned around as they appeared.

The boys recognized her as Vivien Grey.

She recognized them, too, and advanced with a smile, the smile being particularly directed at Dick.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Ransom," she said. "I did not expect to meet you before the time appointed for your visit to our house. You were talking business with my father, I suppose?"

"Your father! Is your father the president of this company?"

"He is."

"He is a fine-looking gentleman," said Dick.

"I think so," she said, archly.

"We called to try and do some business with the com-

pany—we are cargo contractors, but your father didn't think us quite responsible enough to give us even a trial."

"Indeed! Are you able to do this business in a suitable way?"

"We know we are, Miss Grey."

"Then sit down here and I will speak to my father on the subject."

"No, Miss Grey. I am much obliged to you for the offer, but it would hardly be fair, or business-like, to avail ourselves of your intervention. We thank you very much, indeed."

"Well, of course, if you don't wish me to help you I must not; but I have considerable influence with my father, and as you have put me under a great obligation, it seems only right I should try and repay you. However, aside from that, my father, when he learns what you have done for me, will wish to thank you, so do please wait till I run in and see him."

Without waiting for a reply she tripped into the private office, and the boys felt obliged to await her return.

After the lapse of six or seven minutes she appeared at the door and beckoned to them.

"You go in, Dick; I'll wait for you," said Duke. "I am not concerned in the rescue of the young lady, and so there is really no need of me going in."

"All right," said Dick, starting forward.

This time the president of the lumber company got up and shook the boy by the hand.

"You have placed my daughter and myself under great obligations to you, Mr. Ransom," he said. "Had I known I was so much indebted to you I should not have dismissed you and your partner so abruptly. Sit down."

"Father, can't you do some business with this young man and his partner? He assured me that he was able to do whatever he undertook."

"Well, well, Vivien, I will see," replied her father.

He began questioning Dick again about his facilities for carrying lumber and its by-products, and asked him many questions about himself.

Finally he said that he would give the firm a provisional contract, which he would make a regular one if he found them able to keep their end up.

"We will waive the matter of the bond. You had better take your vessel right around to our wharf. I will telephone the superintendent to give you a cargo for Erie, which we are anxious to get off. I will give you the benefit of free loading this time as a bit of encouragement for you."

"Thank you, sir. I promise you that we will do our work as well as Jepson & Co., and that we will give you every satisfaction."

"I trust so," smiled Mr. Grey.

Dick then took his leave, Miss Vivien remaining.

"Shake, old man," said Dick, when he returned to his chum. "The president has reconsidered the turn-down he gave us and I am to come back in an hour and sign a provisional contract with the company, the same to become permanent if we make good."

"That's fine!" cried Duke, delighted at the news.

"In the meantime you will take the schooner around to

the company's wharf where the superintendent will give you a cargo which you are to carry to Erie."

"To Erie!"

"Yes. It's a longer run than to Buckport, and will net us more money."

"Fine!" said Duke.

"Come on, now. I've got to kill an hour, and I'll do that by walking down to the dock with you, where you can get a boatman to put you off to the Polly."

"How about yourself? Will you join the schooner at the company's wharf?"

"I will, after keeping my engagement with Miss Grey. I'll go with you to Erie, and from there I'll take the train to Buckport."

By that time the boys were on the sidewalk, when they started for Barnaby's Dock.

CHAPTER XI.

DUKE EXPRESSES AN OPINION.

In the course of an hour, Duke returned to the office of the lumber company and was immediately shown into the president's room.

The contract was ready in duplicate, and only awaited the signatures of Dick and President Grey to make it operative.

These were soon attached, and after a short talk with the head of the concern, Dick took his leave.

It was about lunch-time, so the boy entered the first restaurant he came to and ate a light meal.

Two hours later he reached the Grey mansion, situated on one of the best and most exclusive streets in the suburbs of the town, and rang the bell.

It was evident that he was expected, for he was shown into the parlor by the maid, and in a few moments Vivien Grey appeared, attired in a fetching afternoon gown, which set her beauty off to great advantage.

She gave him a warm welcome, and then asked him if he had signed the provisional contract with her father, and if the schooner had been taken around to the company's wharf.

He assured her that this had all been done, for he had given his partner directions to sail the schooner around if the wind was strong enough, otherwise to hire a tug to do it.

At this point Mrs. Grey entered the parlor, and Vivien introduced Dick to her.

The lady expressed the pleasure she felt in meeting one who had been so kind to her daughter in a dreadful emergency, and concluded by thanking him for the service he had rendered her only child.

After some conversation, Vivien asked Dick if he would like to go over their property and see the grounds and buildings, and he said he would.

She got her hat and they went outside.

The Grey property was quite an extensive estate, which had originally been purchased by Vivien's grandfather years since, when he started the lumber company.

The business had grown largely under his management, and had developed into the Canadian Lumber Co., a corporation, practically controlled by the Grey family.

When the founder retired from the presidency and active participation in its management, his son, Vivien's father, took his place, and pushed the company still further to the front.

Their export trade to the United States had grown steadily within the last few years, and Jepson & Co., having retained the contract for carrying it made a good thing out of it.

During the last year or so wages had gone up and competition had brought rates down.

The big cargo contractors made less money in consequence.

Old man Jepson decided that the best way to end this unsatisfactory condition of things was to call his business rivals together and propose the adoption of an uniform and higher rate of freight charges on lake traffic.

All the important contractors liked the idea, so a combination was formed, and a scale was adopted that met with general approval.

This was put into effect on the day that Jepson's lumber contract ran out.

There was a howl from shippers, generally, and from the Canadian Lumber Co. in particular.

Mr. Grey proceeded to look for another firm of contractors to haul their cargoes, but, to his disgust, found that every reliable firm wanted the advanced rate—the same as Jepson & Co. demanded for a renewal of their contract.

Such was the condition of affairs when Duke made his first trip across, and was persuaded by the lumber company's agent to take a load over to Buckport.

This had led to the boys securing the provisional contract, as we have seen.

Dick walked around the Grey estate with Vivien and admired the way it was kept in shape.

After the walk they sat on the spacious veranda at the front of the mansion and talked together until Mr. Grey came home.

Dick then said it was time for him to go, but was pressed to remain to dinner.

He did so, and about dark took his leave.

Mr. Grey told him that he could easily get a boatman at Central Wharf to row him around to the company's wharf where the schooner was taking on a cargo of shingles and a deckload of lumber.

When he reached the wharf he found a number of boatmen there, for it was a fine starlight night, and he soon made a bargain with one of them.

It was quite a row, but the boatman was used to such things, and in due time put him alongside of the Polly.

Duke was on deck talking with Tim and Fritz, and keeping a lookout for the coming of his partner.

"Had a good time, old man?" he asked Dick.

"Sure thing! I spent about four hours at the Grey's home. It's a swell place. I'll bet there is none like it around this neighborhood. They made me remain to dinner, and I had a fine lay-out there."

"I suppose you made yourself as solid as possible with

Miss Grey, for the better you stand with her the better our chance will be to make a steady customer out of the lumber company."

"Come now, Duke, if we can't push our way ahead by our own exertions we don't want to have a young lady do it for us."

"That's right. You got the provisional contract, of course?"

"Sure! aren't you loading up here on the strength of it?"

"Gracious! old man Jepson will be hot under the collar when he learns that we are hauling the export trade of the Canadian Lumber Co."

"I'm not worrying about the probable state of Mr. Jepson's feelings on that subject. He has enjoyed the monopoly long enough. It's time there was a change in favor of another firm."

"Jepson & Co. made a lot of money out of the lumber-carrying business at the old rates. We ought to be able to do the same."

"We will, old man. This is where we make a fortune for the firm."

"By the way, I have news for you."

"What is it?"

"The yacht has sailed."

"That so?"

"Yes. She was under way when we pulled up anchor and started for this wharf. I watched to see what course she took."

"She headed for the States, I suppose?"

"No. She rounded the point and steered west."

"If she's got a lot of brandy aboard I guess that was only a blind."

"We have no evidence to show that there is any brandy aboard. I should think that, knowing you are on to their game, they would postpone their purpose for awhile. I don't think it would pay them to run extra risk."

"Mr. Castaing, the Frenchman, appears to be the owner of the Sea Foam. By permitting Mr. Grasp to use his vessel for illegal purposes, it seems clear that he is directly interested in this smuggling business."

"I wish we were ready to sail this moment," said Duke.

"So do I. We could run across during the night and thus save a day."

"I was not thinking about that."

"About what, then?"

"I'd like to try and get across before the yacht. We have to pass Indian Head on our way to Erie, though the proper course takes us a long way off shore. My idea would be to lay close in, at the sacrifice of a couple of hours' time, and pass the Head close enough to see if the other yacht is anchored there, as Mr. Grasp said it was."

"I see no particular reason for doubting his statement."

"I am not satisfied that he told the truth," said Duke, with a wise look. "Why didn't he leave her at our wharf? Having rented the privilege, I should think that is where he would have moored her. Indian Head is not a convenient point for him to take a train for Buffalo, where he'd have to go to reach Clapham by rail, while Buckport is. If the Nymph was alongside our wharf no suspicion could attach to her in connection with a smuggling ven-

ture, while her presence off Indian Head might look suspicious."

"That's true enough, but Mr. Grasp doubtless has his own reasons for leaving the Sea Nymph off the Head. I judge it is part of the game. Maybe he figures that her presence there will draw the attention of the revenue people to the spot, and away from the neighborhood of the place he has selected to land the brandy at."

"I didn't think of that. The idea is not a bad one. I had a different view of the matter."

"What is your view?"

"You may think it foolish, for you appear to be convinced that there actually are two yachts so much alike that they resemble each other down to an accidental scratch across the rudder-post."

"Why, don't you believe there are two—the Sea Nymph at Indian Head and the Sea Foam on this side?"

"I won't say that there aren't two, but I do say that I have strong doubts of the fact."

"I might be inclined to agree with you only I have seen each yacht with its own name on the stern, and on one of the bows at least."

"They say a leopard cannot change its spots, and that seems natural, but what's the matter with a yacht changing its name? The dexterous use of paints and brushes would soon transform Nymph into Foam, and the reverse. The change could be effected out on the lake in a short time. The Sea Nymph, after leaving the American shore, could easily sail into Canadian waters as the Sea Foam, and who, but those on board would be the wiser?"

"By George! the idea never struck me. How came you to think of such a thing?"

"Your remark about the scratch on the rudder-post of the Foam. You said you had seen a similar scratch on the Nymph's rudder-post. It doesn't seem natural that two yachts, no matter how much alike in their construction, could each be scratched in the same place," replied Duke.

"That's true. I was surprised myself by the fact. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that Captain Jinks' story of the twin yachts is a fake, and that the Sea Nymph and the Sea Foam are one and the same boat."

"Just so. There are secret service agents of our governments in Canada on the lookout for suspected parties. Captain Jinks is a suspect since his former supposed smuggling ventures. If a large quantity of cognac was seen to be taken aboard of the Sea Foam in Clapham Harbor, more than seemed necessary for private consumption, the agent would notify the chief inspector on the other side of the fact. Then the Foam would be watched for, and if an attempt was made to land the cognac on the sly it would be seized and the captain and owner arrested. But suppose instead of the Foam appearing, the Nymph shows up. There is no report of her having been seen in Canadian waters; consequently why should she be suspected of having cognac aboard which the skipper proposed to put ashore without notifying the custom-house authorities? See the point?"

"I do, and it gives color to your suspicions."

"If we could run over to Indian Head now I don't think we'd find the Nymph anchored there, unless that

is the place where Mr. Grasp intends to land the cognac I believe he took aboard the Foam last night under cover of the fog."

"But, Duke, the Foam left here over six hours ago, bound west. She's a fast sailer. She could easily reach Indian Head before us, even by a roundabout way, and there we would find her with her name altered back to the Nymph, if your idea is the correct one, so you see your scheme for detecting this supposed ruse, even if we could carry it out, which is impossible under the circumstances, would amount to much," said Dick.

Duke had to admit that his chum's statement of the case was about right.

They continued to talk about Mr. Grasp and his smuggling enterprise for awhile longer, then they turned in for the night.

CHAPTER XII.

DICK AND THE REVENUE INSPECTOR.

The loading of the Polly was not finished until after dinner on the following day, and then she cast off from the wharf and started for the town of Erie.

The wind was light and she did not make very good time, though she did better than the majority of fore-and-afters of her tonnage on the lake would have done under the same circumstances.

With the setting of the sun the wind came on a bit stronger, and as they were almost off Indian Head the boys decided to run in and see if the Sea Nymph was at anchor there.

They got well within range of the promontory as darkness closed in, but could make out no vessel, through the telescope, lying under the lee of the Head.

Still that did not prove that the yacht might not be there, further inshore.

After running in within half a mile of the shore, without having their curiosity rewarded with the sight of any craft at all, Duke hauled the schooner around on the wind and shaped his course direct for Erie.

"I don't believe the yacht is there," said he.

"It's too dark to make sure of the matter," replied his chum.

"It seems to me that we ought to have seen her through the glass if she was there," maintained Duke.

Dick did not dispute the fact, though he maintained that the yacht might be there for all that.

A couple of hours passed and they were approaching Erie when Tim, who was acting as look-out, forward, announced a sail ahead.

As it was a clear night, and they had their lights properly displayed, there was little likelihood of the oncoming craft running into them.

Duke ordered Fritz, who was at the helm, to give the stranger plenty of sea room, and so the two craft came bowling toward each other.

"It's a yacht," said Duke, as he examined the vessel through the night-glass.

"A yacht!" cried Dick, growing interested. "Polly or the Seam Foam or Nymph."

When the two craft came abreast, an eighth of a mile apart, Dick, looking through the glass, declared she was Mr. Grasp's yacht, or her twin, if there was one.

"Coming from the west, you can depend on it she is the craft that was in Clapham Harbor," said Duke. "If she's got cognac aboard she is going to land it to-night. Too bad we can't make out her name. If we saw Sea Nymph on her bows or stern I wouldn't have any doubt at all that the name is changed at will, and that she has no duplicate on the lake."

The yacht swept by and soon left the Polly astern.

An hour later the lights of Erie loomed up on the port bow, and in due time the schooner was anchored off the city.

Next morning they hauled in to a wharf and was boarded by a custom's officer.

The people to whom the lumber was consigned were notified of its arrival, and Dick hired a gang of men to unload.

Shortly afterward he bade his chum good-by and took a train for Buckport.

He reached town in about an hour and hurried home.

His aunt was glad to see him back, and was rejoiced to learn that his trip to Canada had been a great success for the firm.

She said her son had told her that several shippers had been asking terms for freight to various points, and had been given Mr. Judson's scale of prices, which was lower than the increased charges of the combined contractors, and so the shippers were anxious to send their goods by the Polly.

They were waiting to learn when she would arrive.

After dinner, Dick went to the office with his cousin and looked over the memoranda that had been written down for his information.

He found that all inquirers had shipments for that side of the lake—one of them as far as Cleveland.

He called up the scrap-iron people and inquired when they wanted to send their next shipment to the Clapham Foundry.

He was told not for a week at least.

He then called up certain firms who were waiting to hear from him and asked particulars concerning their consignments.

He closed with three, and notified the man who had a cargo for Cleveland that the firm's engagements prevented them from accepting a cargo for that port for a week, consequently it would be necessary for him to apply to somebody else.

The Polly arrived during the night, and early in the forenoon merchandise began arriving for her to carry to Erie and another place further on.

She was ready to sail at dark.

Dick gave his chum instructions to proceed direct to Clapham after getting rid of all his cargo and take on another load of lumber and shingles.

"Advise me by telegraph if the cargo is for any other point than this place," he told Duke.

His partner promised to do so, and an hour later the Polly was gone.

When he got to the office in the morning he found the Sea Nymph moored at the wharf and his friend, the custom-house inspector, on hand.

"Good morning, Mr. Blake," said Dick, politely.

"Good morning, Ransom. The yacht is here again, I see."

"So I observe. Been aboard of her?"

"Yes."

"Had the pleasure of seeing the owner and the skipper?"

"The latter, yes. Mr. Grasp remained at Erie."

"It's a wonder the yacht wouldn't remain there, too, don't you think? I don't see why she should come on here."

"That's the owner's business. Maybe he let Captain Jinks come on to see his family, and he will join the yacht here himself, as it is hardly an hour's ride by rail," said the inspector.

"Nothing suspicious aboard, I suppose?" said Dick.

"No, not that I could make out."

"The Sea Nymph must have stopped somewhere between Erie and this port, or else she sailed beyond this place and has now returned here."

"Why do you say that?" asked the inspector.

"Because the Polly, with myself aboard, passed the yacht, or her dead image, at nine o'clock, p. m., the night before last, a few miles this side of Erie."

"Indeed! I heard you were over at Clapham on business."

"Yes, sir, and I did quite a good stroke of business in that town. Perhaps it may interest you to learn that I met Captain Jinks and Mr. Grasp there."

"I am not surprised to hear that."

"They were stopping aboard of a yacht which they called the Sea Foam, the twin of the Nymph, and they told me that they had left the latter yacht anchored off Indian Head."

"Then they went to Clapham by rail. Rather singular they should do that when they could just as well have sailed there in their own craft."

"So I thought. You did not hear why they went to Clapham?"

"No."

"I think I can tell you. They went there to call on a French gentleman, named Castaing."

"Ah! That's the big liquor importer. Grasp Brothers get their foreign wines and liquors from him. Hardly a week passes that something in that line does not pass through the Erie custom-house for them."

"You have no suspicion that some of their imported stock reaches their warehouse without passing Government inspection, have you?"

Inspector Blake winked his eye solemnly at vacancy, and then asked Dick why he made such a remark.

"Because I have reason to believe that the real object of Mr. Grasp's presence in Clapham, with Captain Jinks, was to smuggle a quantity of cognac over in the yacht Sea Foam."

"I should like you to tell me all you know about the matter. We have been informed about the Sea Foam."

She seems to be a new vessel on the lake, for she is not listed in the last edition of the Marine Register."

"I am not sure but the Sea Nymph and the Sea Foam are one and the same."

"What makes you think so?"

"Their extraordinary likeness, down to an accidental scratch on their rudder-posts. I saw the Sea Foam while I was in Clapham, and only that I saw the word Foam on her stern I would have sworn she was the Nymph."

"This is interesting intelligence. Go on."

"Come into the office and I will tell you my story," said Dick, unlocking the door and leading the way in.

Dick sat down at his desk and the inspector took a seat close to him.

"You know, of course, there was a fog on the lake the other night?" began the young cargo contractor.

"Yes. It was not very thick here, though, and it is not an unusual occurrence in the summer," replied the inspector.

"It was thick enough in Clapham," said Dick. "It was owing to that fog that I came into possession of the information I am going to tell you."

Dick went on to say that he and his partner were dining in a big restaurant when they discovered the presence of Mr. Grasp and Captain Jinks in the Canadian town.

Then he told how he and Duke walked down to the water-front to connect with the Polly's boat, but owing to the fog they missed their bearings and walked out on Central Wharf instead of Barnaby's Dock, which adjoined it.

"We didn't find our boat there, and after waiting awhile, Duke left me to find out if we were on the right wharf or not," went on Dick. "While he was away Mr. Grasp and Captain Jinks arrived in a cab, accompanied by Mr. Castaing."

Dick then told the inspector all he had overheard the men say about the smuggling enterprise they appeared to have on the tapis.

He explained how the captain detected his presence after awhile and grabbed him, and what took place after that.

"So Mr. Grasp tried to bribe you to keep mum, eh?" said the inspector.

"That's what he did, but I haven't learned to take bribes yet," answered Dick.

"And after you and your partner left them, Captain Jinks and Mr. Grasp went off to the yacht?"

"They did, while Mr. Castaing rode off along the water-front in the cab."

"Do you know if the yacht slipped away during the night?"

"She did not, because there was no wind and she couldn't have sailed if Mr. Grasp had wanted her to ever so bad."

The inspector rubbed his nose and appeared to be considering.

"Your story, the truthfulness of which I cannot doubt, furnishes another link in the case the Government is—but there. I mustn't be telling stories out of school. It is enough for me to say that certain people are under surveillance, and we expect to catch them napping before long."

Dick suddenly recollected the incident he witnessed out of the window of the printing office, where the stout, red-faced man, whom he later on learned was Mr. Grasp, was followed by a seedy-looking individual who had been lounging in the immediate vicinity.

It now struck him that the seedy man was a revenue inspector in disguise.

He did not mention the fact to his friend, Blake, but said:

"There is no doubt in my mind that both Mr. Grasp and Captain Jinks are engaged in the smuggling business at odd times. I am not sure that they carried out their plans on this occasion for the reason that they knew I was on to them. My partner, however, believes that they did take cognac aboard that night under cover of the fog, and that they landed it at Indian Head, or some other spot, shortly after we passed their yacht in the schooner. That would prove they have good nerve."

"A smuggler without nerve wouldn't amount to much," replied the inspector. "I am of the opinion that your partner is right. Well, I must be going. I am much obliged to you for the information you have given me. Too bad you could not have communicated the facts sooner. Had we nailed the people with the goods you would have been entitled to a substantial reward. Good morning."

CHAPTER XIII.

CAPTAIN JINKS AGAIN.

Shortly after the departure of the inspector, Captain Jinks walked into the office of Ransom & Darrell.

"Good morning, Ransom!" said the captain, suavely.

"Good morning, Captain Jinks!" replied Dick, politely.

"I see you are back on your old stamping-ground."

"Yes, sir, I am on the job here."

The captain looked out of the window and stroked his chin, reflectively.

"I don't wish to pry into your business, Ransom, but it seemed strange to see you in Clapham."

"I don't mind telling you that I went over to secure a cargo contract—a big one—otherwise you wouldn't have seen me there," replied Dick.

"I don't know of any big contract you could get there unless—you refer to the Canadian Lumber Co., and I don't think you'd stand any show with them."

"Why not?"

"Jepson & Co. have the inner track there, and that firm is the most important in this town."

"Jepson & Co.'s dealings with the lumber company has come to an end by reason of the increase they made in their rates."

"But you couldn't do anything with the Canadian people. They wouldn't make any arrangements with a boy firm."

"You seem to know all about it, Captain Jinks," smiled Dick.

"Well, you didn't do anything with them, did you?"

"Do you know of another schooner we can charter, captain?"

"What do you want with another schooner? Is the Polly

too big for your business?" asked the skipper, with a malicious grin, as he took a cigar from his pocket and lighted it.

"No, sir; but we need another to accommodate the trade that is coming our way," replied Dick. "I had to turn a cargo for Cleveland down yesterday because we were unable to handle it, owing to the fact that the Polly had as much as she could attend to."

"Say, what are you giving me, Ransom?" said Captain Jinks, staring at the young cargo contractor in an incredulous way.

"The truth. Do you doubt it?"

"It doesn't seem reasonable. Why, Mr. Judson didn't have any too much business when he died. Where in thunder would you catch on to such a rush?"

At that moment the telephone bell rang.

Dick put the receiver to his ear and found that a skipper wanted to know if he could carry a load of canned goods to Port Edward for him.

"I can't take another cargo for two days at least unless I can secure an additional vessel," Dick replied. "I'm going to try and charter another schooner right away. If I succeed I'll let you know."

Captain Jinks listened to his words and he began to have some fresh thoughts.

"Apparently you are doing better than I imagined," he said, as the boy hung up the receiver.

"We are doing first-class," replied Dick.

"Did you really make any arrangements with the lumber company?"

"We did; enough to keep us pretty busy for some time to come."

"Jepson & Co. will try to queer you."

"How?"

"Oh, there are more than one way of skinning a cat."

"Jepson & Co. had better leave us alone. Phipps & Morris tried to work a little game on us, but it didn't go through. We are able to fight back every time."

Captain Jinks made no answer to that.

He looked out of the window and stroked his chin again.

"By the way, Ransom, have you told any one about that conversation you overheard in the fog on Central Wharf the other night?" he asked.

"I told my partner."

"Any one else?"

"I decline to say whether I have or not."

"I take that as an admission that you have," said the captain, nervously.

"Suppose I have? It was clearly my duty, wasn't it?"

"It wasn't a fair deal to go back on your friends."

"Mr. Grasp isn't a friend of mine. As for yourself—I have nothing against you, captain, except the reputation you have acquired in the alleged smuggling line."

"Alleged—that's just it. Nothing has ever been proved against me."

"No, but if you play with fire you are likely to be burned. If I were you, Captain Jinks, I'd quit before you get into real trouble. You are under suspicion, and are being watched right along. I tell you this out of consideration for you. If you have run several loads of cognac suc-

cessfully, which I believe you have, be satisfied and get out of the crooked business. If you don't it is only a question of a short time before you'll be yanked out by the Government, and then you'll be sorry you didn't take my advice. You are clever, no doubt, but there are clever men opposed to you. In the long run you'll get it in the neck."

"I'm sorry you gave us away, Ransom," said the captain, with an injured look. "It was an unfriendly act. We might have had a load of cognac aboard the Foam at the time, and we'd have had to send it ashore."

"Are you sure that you didn't take a load aboard after you and Mr. Grasp parted with me?"

"Certainly not. Do you think we were fools?" exclaimed the captain, energetically. "You were on to us so we couldn't afford to take chances."

Dick laughed.

The yacht lay for several days at the wharf and then it sailed west to Erie.

Before she left the Polly returned to Buckport with a full cargo of shingles and a small deckload of light lumber.

She was unloaded as soon as possible and then loaded up with boxes of canned goods for Port Edward, for which place she sailed that night.

Duke was instructed to communicate by 'phone with the Canadian Lumber Co. on his arrival at Port Edward to see if they had a load ready, if not he was to come directly back to Buckport.

On the following day Dick received a visit from a representative of Jepson & Co.

"We understand that you are doing the hauling for the Canadian Lumber Co.," said the visitor.

"We are," replied the boy.

"I suppose this is merely a temporary arrangement they have made with you?"

"Possibly," replied Dick, who wasn't giving out information to his rivals.

"How did you get it?"

"That is one of our business secrets."

"You are only a pair of boys. Do you expect to make the business go?"

"We hope so."

"This is the Judson plant you have, eh?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Judson was my uncle."

"He left it to you, I suppose?"

"No, sir. He left it to my aunt. But it was understood it was to come to me."

"You are doing business at the old rates, I believe?"

"At present, yes."

"How would you like to come in with the big contractors and secure the higher rates?"

"No, sir. We are going to remain independent contractors."

"And try to secure customers by cutting rates," sneered the visitor.

"We shall charge a fair rate in proportion to our operating expenses."

"Well, you know your business. I wish you good day."

"Good day, Mr. Brown!"

Duke returned two days afterward with a fair load of

shingles, and by that time the scrap-iron people were ready to ship another load to the Clapham Foundry.

Dick had a lot of business in sight which he could not touch without securing a second schooner.

There were two vessels for hire in Buckport, but the owners wouldn't entertain an offer from him, which showed that there was influence at work against the firm.

He went down to Erie, but found that there was nothing doing there.

Then Duke told him that there was a good schooner in Clapham advertised for charter which he might get if he went over and talked the matter up with the owner.

He decided to do so, and that afternoon he sailed once more for Canada.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

They reached Clapham next morning, and while Duke was discharging the iron, Dick started out to call on the owner of the schooner, the Prince.

The owner was willing to make a deal with him if he furnished good reference.

Dick took the liberty of referring to President Grey, of the lumber company.

The owner of the schooner said he would call on Mr. Grey, and Dick could return for his answer that afternoon.

Dick took his leave and made a call himself on Mr. Grey.

The lumber man was pleased to meet him again, and said he was glad to hear that the firm of Ransom & Darrell was doing so well.

He said he would recommend the firm to the owner of the schooner that Dick wanted to charter.

Then Dick had his lunch at a restaurant and made a flying visit to Vivien Grey at her home.

The girl was delighted to see him again, and induced him to stay longer than he intended.

Duke got orders to take the Polly to the lumber company's wharf for a load of shingles that was to go to Erie.

He commenced loading up next morning, but owing to delays the cargo was not all on board before five o'clock.

After supper they left the harbor.

The sky was overcast and it was blowing half a gale from the eastward.

"We're going to have a dirty night," said Duke.

"I fear so," replied Dick. "Looks stormy, and a storm on this lake is generally a corker."

As time passed the wind blew harder, and the sea grew rougher.

By ten o'clock a heavy gale was on.

Suddenly through the darkness and the ruck of the storm a yacht loomed up close astern of them.

She was going through the water like a racehorse.

"The Sea Nymph!" cried Dick, after a good look at her.

"You mean the Sea Foam, for that's the name I see through the glass," replied Duke.

Dick took the glass and was convinced.

The yacht swept by like the phantom Flying Dutchman and was gone.

"She's going some, all right," said Duke.

"And we're going some, too," replied Dick. "I wonder if she has any cognac on board this trip?"

It grew darker and stormier.

The schooner tossed and rolled heavily.

Fortunately, she had no deck load this time, and the shingles were light.

Duke stood the trick at the helm himself, with Fritz to help him.

About midnight, when off Indian Head, a troublesome sea came over the starboard quarter and smashed the compass hood, putting the instrument out of business.

Duke lost his reckoning and ordered the mainsails lowered and the jibs closely reefed.

Half an hour later the Polly went ashore inside of Indian Head.

She struck in a good sandy place, fortunately, and slid out of reach of the heavy surf, but it would take a strong tug to drag her off later.

Dick and Duke took lanterns and stepped ashore to see how badly she was beached.

While they were examining their predicament, Dick called his chum's attention to a light that looked as if it came from a house on the shore.

"I'll go there and find out where we are at," he said.

So he handed his lantern to Duke and started.

It took him half an hour of rocky walking to reach the vicinity of the light.

Then he saw that it came from the deck of a vessel, and he soon made out that the vessel was the yacht that had passed them on the lake.

His curiosity was excited, not only by the fact that she was anchored well up in a bite of the shore, but because goods were being taken out of her.

He proceeded to watch the operations, and soon made out where the cases of cognac were being taken to—a cave, the entrance to which was covered by a dense growth of shrubbery.

Here was a discovery he could turn to his personal advantage.

By putting the revenue authorities onto the secret hiding-place in time to nab the goods he would come in for half of the value of the confiscated liquor.

But how was he to do this in time?

He had no idea of his whereabouts.

The only thing he could do was to start ahead into the darkness on the chance of finding a house and learning from the tenants how to reach the nearest town.

In an hour he reached a farmhouse, and after some difficulty aroused the man who lived there.

Then he learned that his schooner must have gone ashore inside of Indian Head.

He also learned that there was a village on the railroad a mile away by the road to the east.

He started for the village.

When he reached it it was dark and silent as a cemetery.

He blundered around the streets till he found the principal one, where he discovered an inn.

He aroused the proprietor and upon inquiry found it had telephone communication with Erie.

He called up the office in that city and asked to be put in communication with the custom-house authorities.

An hour later, close on to morning, Dick got in communication with an official.

What he told that man induced the revenue officer to get busy, and he promised to meet Dick at the inn as soon as he could get a locomotive to bring him and his men down.

Six men, including the official, appeared soon after daylight at the inn, and after some further explanation the young cargo contractor led the bunch right to the cave where the yacht was anchored.

The party entered and found a large lot of smuggled cognac in place—many thousand dollars' worth, and representing at least three cargoes.

Then the officers went aboard the yacht and arrested Captain Jinks and also Mr. Grasp, who was in his private stateroom.

They protested that they were guilty of nothing till the officer told them that they had been in the cave and seen its contents.

The cognac was removed to Erie and later on sold, Dick receiving \$3,000 as his share of the affair.

At the trial the fact came out that the Sea Nymph and Sea Foam was one and the same vessel.

Mr. Grasp escaped with a heavy fine, but Captain Jinks went to prison.

In the meantime the Polly was pulled off by a powerful tug from Erie, the cost of which knocked a hole in the recent profits of the firm.

Dick afterward made good the loss out of his reward, as he thought that no more than right, seeing that the misfortune of the Polly led to the reward he got.

Long before Dick got his reward the firm had two schooners employed in their business, and was making money fast at the old rates.

The combine united against them and tried to drive them out of business by reducing rates, but Mr. Grey and the lumber company backed them up, financially, and they won out.

They soon had to put on a third schooner, and their nervy and aggressive way completely foiled the opposition.

In a year or two they were on the high road to fortune.

Dick also was on the high road to happiness, for he was the acknowledged fiance of Vivien Grey, daughter of the wealthy Canadian.

Dick and his chum are still partners in the business to this day and both are wealthy, having made a fortune for the firm.

Next week's issue will contain "OUT TO WIN; OR, THE MYSTERY OF SAFE DEPOSIT BOX NO. 666. (A Wall Street Story.)"

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GOOD STORIES.

Some time ago we referred in this column to the novel method of raising kegs of nails from a sunken vessel in the Mississippi River by the use of electro-magnets. This method has suggested to the Navy Department that torpedoes which have gone to the bottom because of some defect can be raised in a similar manner. Hereafter, in practice firing, when a torpedo is lost, the approximate point at which it sank will be marked with buoy, so that the region may be explored with electro-magnet, and the torpedo be thus recovered. The lifting power of the magnets will not have to be very great, owing to the buoyancy of the torpedo in the water.

In order to overcome the difficulty of cleansing a milk bottle thoroughly, a "bottomless" bottle has recently been invented. The device consists of a tube formed like a bottle, but open at each end, so that all parts of the interior are readily accessible. When the bottle is to be used, a paraffined paper disk is fitted into the larger end of the tube to serve as a bottom, and is held securely by means of stiff spring metal strips. After the bottle has been filled, it is closed in the usual way by means of a paraffined paper cap. The caps and bottoms, being made of paper, may be discarded after use, and new ones may be employed with every fresh use of the bottle.

A curious natural phenomenon has been observed in the lower Emmen Valley above the Lake of Brienz, Switzerland. The other day the inhabitants woke up to find that it had been snowing both in the valley and on the slopes of the surrounding hills. About six inches of new snow was lying, and as far as the eye could see it was not white, but of a grayish black color, as if a thick coating of dust and soot had accumulated upon it. It was much blacker than snow which has been lying a week in a city exposed to all the smuts of the surrounding chimneys, whereas of course in the Emmen Valley there was nothing to soil it. The only explanation which any one can offer of the phenomenon of black snow is that it may be due to volcanic ash brought by winds across the sea and the mountains from Etna, which has lately been in eruption. Red snow, of course, is a fairly common phenomenon in the Andes and was remarked by Darwin. So far no other part of the Alps except the Emmen Valley seems to have had the unpleasant experience of a fall of black snow.

Few of us have ever been enabled to familiarize ourselves with the color of pure gold, for the reason that gold, for practical purposes, must be alloyed. It is a curious fact that while

we might naturally expect to find pure gold richer in color than the alloy, such is not the case. Indeed, pure gold is considerably paler than the alloyed metal, wherein there is a small proportion of copper or copper and silver, a circumstance that gives it a reddish tinge. Then, too, all gold is not alike when refined. Austrian gold, for instance, is distinctly redder than the metal found in California. Furthermore, placer gold is yellower than gold taken from quartz—one of the mysteries of metallurgy, since the gold in placers comes from that which is in quartz. It is said that the purest coins ever struck were the fifty-dollar gold pieces once in common use on the Pacific coast. The coinage of these was stopped by reason of the great loss by abrasion and also because it was easy to remove the interior of these coins and to substitute baser metals. The California fifty-dollar gold pieces were octagonal in shape and were the most valuable coins ever minted and circulated.

JOKES AND JESTS.

Teacher—Can you tell me what a dromedary is, Tommy?
Tommy—Yes, ma'am; a dromedary is a two-masted camel.

"Miss Biggs is interested in you, pa." "How so?" "Why, to-day, after she told me seven times to sit down and behave myself, she said she wondered what sort of a father I had."

"Some scientists," began Mr. Gay, significantly, "consider kissing dangerous. Do you?" "Well," replied Miss Smart, "I think it would be for you. My big brother is within call."

Alice (aged five)—Mamma, my appetite says it's time for dinner. Mother—Well, dear, go and see what the clock says. Alice (some second later)—The clock says my appetite is ten minutes fast!

A colored woman of notoriously bad character, was arrested in a Southern town and taken to the lock-up. As the white policeman was conducting her through the street, they passed a colored man who was leaning against a post, who said to the prisoner: "Nebber you mind, Mandy, I'll tell Sam John-sing, who has been payin' yer attenshuns, dat I see yer walk-in' erlong der street, arm-in-arm wid a white man."

The smart boy recently referred to in the papers, who sent his application for a post by telegram, and again telegraphed in explanation: "No time write full these days fierce comp."—and got the job in consequence, is surpassed by the wide-a-wake lad who rushed breathlessly into a city office and gasped, "Please, I've come after a situation as office boy." "We've got an office boy already," was the answer. "No, you haven't, sir; he's just been run over," said the lad. He, too, left the ranks of the unemployed on the spot.

The Main Cause.—"De objec' ob dis hyar meetin'," said the chairman of a gathering of colored people, "is to considah inter de financial en de pecuniary affairs ob dis chu'ch. Will de committee on finances please give its repo't?" Thereupon the chairman of the committee mentioned, rose stiffly and said, with great gravity: "De committee has only to repo't dat it has made a long en car'ful investigation inter de financial en pecuniary affairs ob de church, en dat de main en principal cause ob de finances bein' so low is de lack ob money."

THE DOCTOR'S RIDE

By Col. Ralph Fenton

One wet, dismal afternoon in November, Dr. Huntoon received a summons to Brance's Valley from Mrs. Pellew, whose little boy had fallen from the roof of a shed, and broken his arm.

It was seven miles to Brance's Valley, and the road was a very lonely one, but country physicians are accustomed to visiting patients at a distance, and Dr. Huntoon's practice frequently took him half a day's journey from home. So the seven miles' jaunt appeared to him but a short ride, and his horse was an excellent traveler.

The break was a bad one, and the little patient was not in condition to be left until nearly ten o'clock.

Then the doctor prepared to start on his ride home.

Mrs. Pellew urged him very earnestly to wait until morning, for the night had closed in dark and dreary; the rain still fell in a slow steady pour, and the prospect of a ride of seven miles could not be very cheerful, even to one accustomed to being out at all times, and in all kinds of weather.

"Do stay," she said, as she opened the house door a little way and looked out on the night. "It is dark as pitch, and raining harder than ever."

"I can't think of such a thing," answered the doctor firmly, as he pulled on his overcoat. "I might be needed at home at any moment. This coat will protect me even if it rains like a second deluge."

"But I should think you would be afraid," said Mrs. Pellew, who was a very timid woman. "No money could hire me to ride down that dark road at night, and only one house between mine and yours, too!"

"Afraid!" laughed the doctor, "afraid of what?"

"Of robbers, and—and—of ghosts," answered Mrs. Pellew, hesitatingly.

She expected to be laughed at, but she was not mistaken.

The doctor was much amused.

"I have just fifty shillings in my pocketbook," he said, "and the robber who asks for it may have it and welcome. He would deserve more than that if he ventured out on such a night as this. As to ghosts, I don't believe in them. I've ridden over these roads, day and night, for fifteen years, and never saw or heard anything that I could attribute to a supernatural agency. The night is dark and ugly enough, but I shall be at home and in bed by midnight, I'll wager."

"But Tom Bruce said a spirit followed him down that road as far as Mose Brown's, one night," ventured Mrs. Pellew.

"The spirit of his brandy flask, I guess," said the doctor.

He bade the little woman good-by, gave her some final directions about the boy, and then opened the door and vaulted on his horse, which stood waiting for him in the rain.

The road for several miles lay up-hill, and, impatient as the doctor was to get home, he was sufficiently merciful to his old mare to let her walk.

He allowed the reins to lie on her neck, and, sitting back in his saddle, he abandoned himself to thoughts of a case of blood-poisoning which had been brought to his notice that day.

He was always interested in anything out of the usual order of diseases and accidents.

Suddenly he became conscious of a peculiar sound behind him.

He roused himself and listened, and heard distinctly the tramp, tramp of feet close at the mare's heels.

At first he thought it only an echo from the hills, but after

listening attentively for a moment he became convinced that he was mistaken in this.

"It must be a man walking in my track," he thought. "But why does he follow me so silently? Perhaps, after all, it may be a robber. I will get out the money."

And he smiled, remembering what Mrs. Pellew had said.

He turned in his saddle and strove to penetrate the darkness behind him.

But in vain.

He could distinguish nothing, and still the steady, regular tramp never ceased.

"Halloa, there! Who are you?" he called, loudly.

But there was no answer save the mocking echo of his own voice from the hills, and the dreary moaning of the wind through the rustling pines.

"Deaf and dumb, perhaps," he muttered. "But why on earth does he follow me? I'll start off on a gallop when I get to a level bit of road, and leave him behind."

The mysterious presence annoyed him.

To be followed in such a manner, even by a man, on a dark, wet night, was anything but pleasant.

Such company was worse than none at all.

The doctor felt angry at himself as the heavy tread continued to follow him.

Then the memory of Mose Bruce's story of the wandering spirit came to him and set his nerves on edge.

"To think I should give even a thought to that drunken fellow's yarns," he muttered, under his breath.

He determined to make another effort to elicit an answer from the man he felt sure was following him.

So, just as he reached the level piece of road for which he had longed, he turned again in his saddle and shouted:

"Who are you? Why do you follow me in this senseless manner?"

His tone was rough, for he was beginning to grow angry at the fellow's obstinate silence.

Again he waited for an answer, and again the echo of his own words was all he heard.

"Won't answer," he muttered. "Well, good-by, then."

He touched his mare's flank with his whip as he spoke, and she at once broke into a gallop.

But it was not "good-by" by any means.

The mysterious presence was not left behind.

The steady, regular tramp still fell at the mare's heels, going faster as she went faster, and slackening its pace as she slackened hers.

The doctor began to feel a little uneasy.

He had said he was not superstitious.

But there is a grain of superstition in us all, no matter how courageous we may be, and Dr. Huntoon, in spite of his belief to the contrary, was no exception to the rule.

As he found that the mysterious presence continued to cling close to his mare's heels, he knew, of course, that it could not be a human being who followed him; and, in spite of his efforts to keep his thoughts upon his patients and their ailments, all the horrible stories of ghosts and spirits which he had ever heard came thronging into his mind.

"I will know what it is!" he muttered.

And laying his hand on his mare's rein, he brought her to a sudden standstill.

Instantly the footfalls ceased also.

For a moment there was almost a dead silence.

The moaning of the wind through the trees, and the dreary drip, drip of the rain were the only sounds to be heard.

The doctor made no further effort to repress the fear which stole over him.

Never before had he had such an experience.

He felt oppressed with the sense of a palpable dread, and he shuddered as he started his mare again, and heard again, as he expected, the regular tramp, tramp close behind him.

He made up his mind to bear it as best he could until he reached the house of Mose Brown, which was then about three miles distant, and only a mile from the doctor's own house.

But "bearing it" was not so easy, he found.

The darkness, the slow, dreary fall of the rain, the wind whistling and moaning through the pines, and that awful presence, with its heavy, regular tread, all conspired to shake the doctor's boasted courage.

Great drops of perspiration stood on his brow, and cold chills crept down his spine as he heard, mile after mile, that ceaseless, regular tramp close at the mare's heels.

He became wrought up to such a state of nervous excitement at last that, just before he reached Brown's house, he urged his mare into a run, and the spirited animal, partaking of her master's excitement, did not stop to have the gate opened for her, but cleared it at a bound, and stood quivering before the door of the house.

Old Brown heard the great clatter, and throwing up the window, looked out.

"Who's there?" he called. "And what's wanted?"

"Come down here," shouted the doctor. "And be quick."

Brown hurried into his clothes, and was soon at the door.

"If it isn't the doctor!" he exclaimed, as the flickering light of the candle he carried fell on the horse and rider. "Well, I declare! And what's the matter now?"

With shaking voice the doctor told his story, and tried to convince his neighbor of its truth. But Brown smiled grimly as he said:

"All your imagination, doctor. You've been sitting up late of nights, and got nervous. There ain't no mysterious spirit on this road, I'll take my oath."

"All the same I want to investigate this matter," said the doctor. "Get your horse and a lantern and come with me. We will go back over the road a piece, and you shall hear the noise for yourself, and this time we will see something."

Brown grumbled a little at being obliged to go on such a fool's errand, but he went to the stable to get his horse.

As he came round the side of the house a few minutes later with a lantern in one hand and his horse's bridle in the other, he said, grimly:

"I'm ready; but we won't find no ghost, I'll bet ye."

"I never believed in spirits before," answered the doctor; "but this could be nothing but a ghost."

They advanced together to the gate.

"Halloa, what's this?" cried Brown, as he held the lantern high in the air so that the light fell full upon the gate.

There, on the other side, with his head held high and his eyes a little startled by the light, stood a yearling colt, waiting patiently.

"There's your ghost, doctor," cried Brown, bursting into a loud laugh. "He's waiting for you. Start out, and you'll hear his 'tramp, tramp' close to your mare's heels."

As the doctor heard his words repeated he flushed painfully. He saw it all in an instant.

The colt had been lost on the road, and had, naturally enough, followed his mare for company.

When the mare walked the colt had walked, and when the former galloped the latter had assumed the same pace.

"Brown," said the doctor, "I'll attend you and your family free for the next five years if you'll promise to say nothing about this affair. I'd never hear the last of it if it once got out."

Brown promised.

He put the colt in his barn to be kept until inquired for by the owner, and the doctor went the rest of his way home undisturbed by the "mysterious presence."

He did not even tell his wife of the adventure.

But, nevertheless, the story got out.

Brown's ability to keep a promise depended entirely on his ability to keep sober, and this he sometimes failed to do.

A couple of weeks after the doctor's ride, he went to Brance's Valley and sold a cow to such advantage that he thought he could afford to indulge in an extra glass of beer.

He took just enough to make him talkative, and the consequence was that the next time the doctor visited the valley he was greeted on all sides with questions about his ride from Mrs. Pellew's, and it was long before he heard the last of his strange ghost.

SIX-INCH SPIDERS.

A great many plants, animals and insects which are familiar within our more temperate climate attain a larger size in the hot tropical regions of the globe, and none, perhaps, are more remarkable than the different classes of spiders. You have been told of the huge, black, hairy-legged tarantula, with his great, staring, bead-like eyes and long, cruel forceps or nippers, who lurks in dark corners and stows himself in the toes of your boots and other unexpected places; but as a general rule he can be avoided, and the web he spins interferes but little with any one. But there are other spiders, equally large and formidable, that spread their nets across roads and paths, much to the occasional discomfort of unwary horsemen or short-sighted folks on foot.

Up in the mountains of Ceylon and India there is a fellow of this kind that spins a web like bright yellow silk, the central net of which is five feet in diameter, while the supporting lines or guys, as they are called, measure sometimes ten or twelve feet long; and riding quickly in the early morning, you may dash right into it, the stout threads twining round your face like a lace veil, while as the creature that has woven it generally takes up his position in the middle, he generally catches you right on the nose, and though he seldom bites or stings, the contact with his large body and long legs is anything but pleasant. If you do forget yourself and try to catch him, bite he will, and though not venomous, as his jaws are as powerful as a bird's beak, you are not likely to forget the encounter. The bodies of these spiders are very handsomely decorated, being bright gold or scarlet underneath, while the upper part is covered with the most delicate slate-colored fur. So strong are the webs that birds the size of larks are frequently caught therein, and even the small but powerful scaly lizard falls a victim.

Often have I sat and watched the yellow or scarlet monster, measuring, when waiting for its prey with its legs stretched out—fully six inches, striding across the middle of the net, and noted the rapid manner in which he winds his stout threads around the unfortunate captives. He usually throws the coils about the head till the wretched victim is first blinded and then choked. In many unfrequented dark nooks of the jungle you come across most perfect skeletons of small birds caught in these terrible snares, the strong folds of which prevent the delicate bones from falling to the ground after the wind and weather have dispersed the flesh and feathers.

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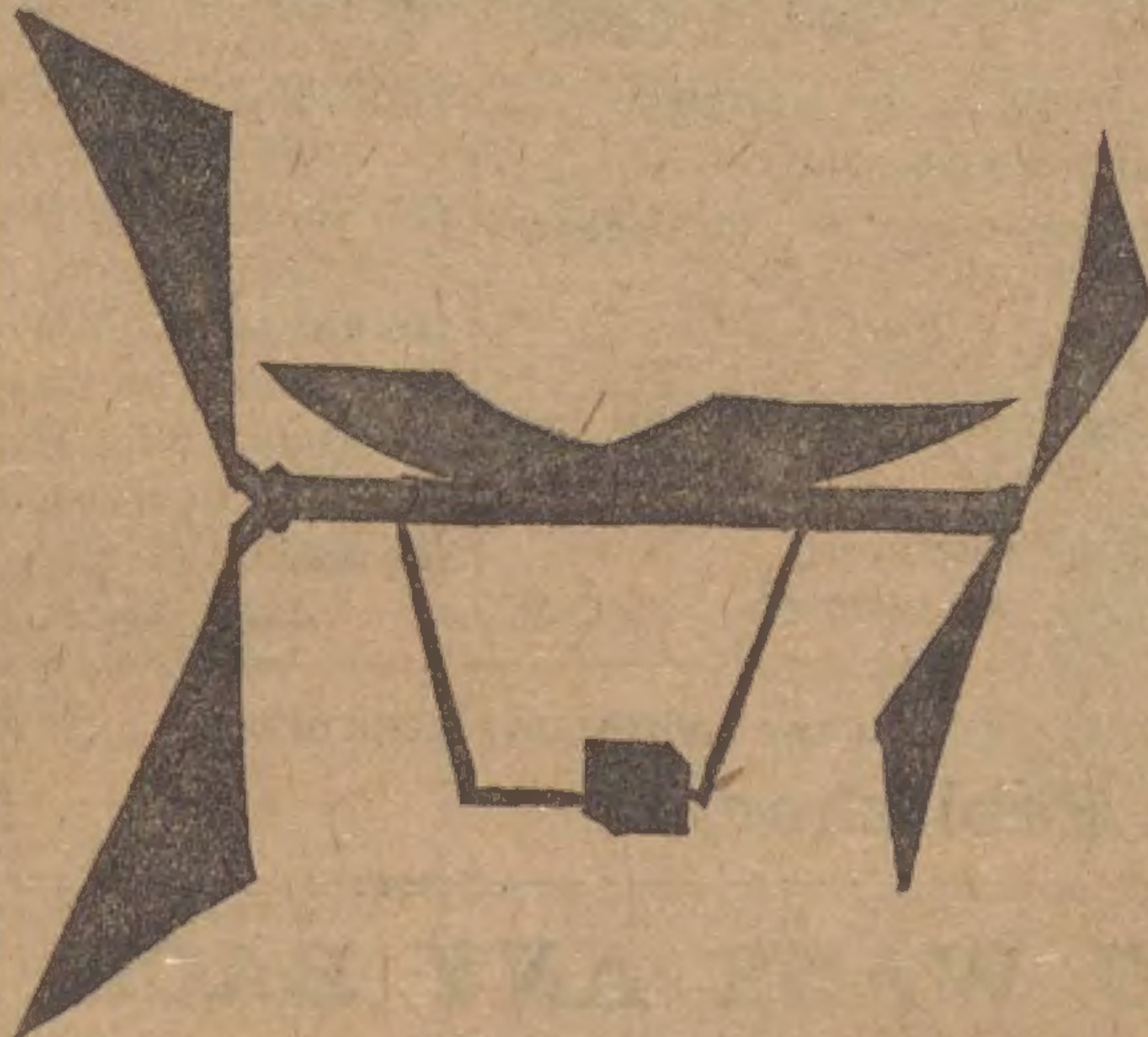
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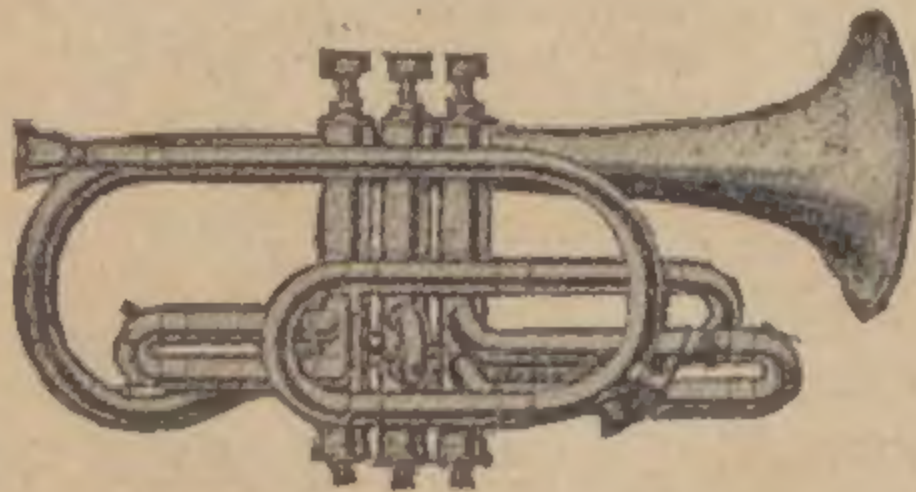
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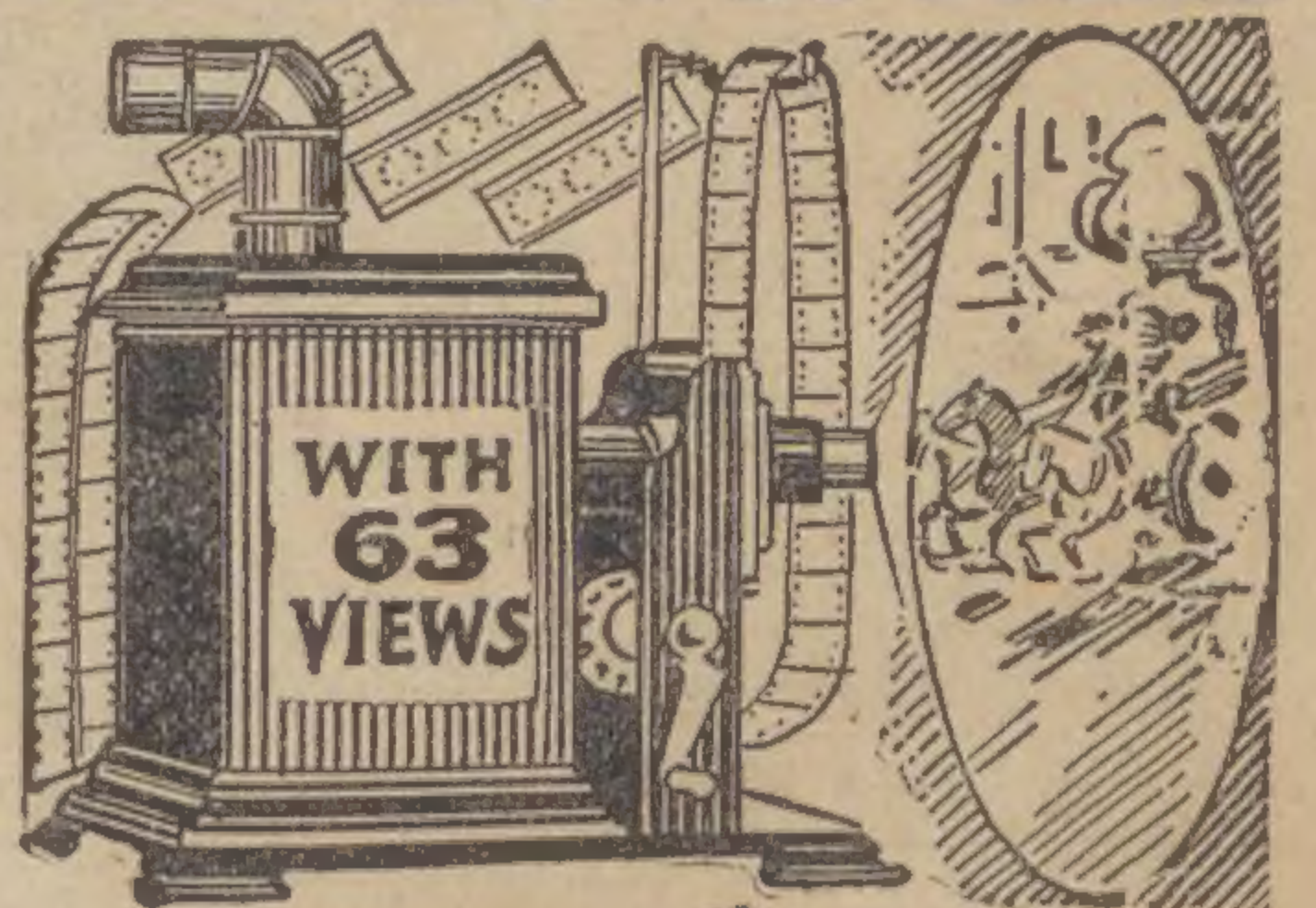
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